ANTARCTIC PRESS

HOW to COLOR for COMICS

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INTRODUCTION

The coloring of line art art for comics is an artform all its own, make no mistake about it. Color adds definition and tone to form. It can evoke mood and power. It can add infinite dimensions to otherwise static line art. It can do all these things and more. In fact, its scope is only limited by the colorist's imagination. The traditional approach to coloring comics is virtually gone. The "Dr. Martins" have dried up, and the modern computer has taken their throne. It's just a case of progress. And the progress of this technology is awesome: Millions of colors at your disposal, a cadre of tools and filters...all that's required is the imagination, a degree of training and discipline.

We hope this book will give you a good insight on how to color comics and how to use that knowledge to expand your imagination. The comic book colorist is an integral part of a bigger machine in the comic book world, a machine that thrives on the creative power of passionate individuals who work together to create an artform that is truly remakable—make no mistake about it.

-LEE DUHIG
4.18.01

WHAT YOU NEED:

1.A computer, of course.
2.A version of Photoshop (3.0 or higher).
3.A beginner's knowledge of Photoshop.
4.Lastly, some time and creativity.

SPECIAL THANKS:
MICHELE GUALANO, JOCHEN WELTJENS, JOSEPH WIGHT, PATRICK THORNTON, DAVID HUTCHISON, BEN DUNN, JOE DUNN, FRED PERRY, TED NOMURA, THE STAFF OF ANTARCTIC PRESS AND ITS FANS, AND EVERY COLORIST WHO HAS EVER WORKED IN COMICS...
...ALSO MY PARENTS, ROBBIE BEVARD, AND RICHARD DUHIG

HOW TO COLOR FOR COMICS

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LAYOUT DESIGN AND COLORING: GURU EFX
EDITED BY: DOUG DLIN
PUBLISHER: ANTARCTIC PRESS

***Antarctic Press Presents: How to Color Comics* #1, April 2001**, is published by the Antarctic Press, 7272 Wurzbach Suite #204, San Antonio, Texas, 78240. FAX#:(210)614-5029. *Ninja High School, Warrior Nun Areala, Shotgun Mary* and all related characters are ® and ©2001 Ben Dunn and the Antarctic Press. *Gold Digger, Fred Perry's Legacy* and all related characters are ® and ©2001 Fred Perry. *Twilight X* is ©2001 Arclight Studios/Joseph Wight. Adobe Photoshop is ©1989-2001 Adobe Systems, Inc. All other material is ™ and ©2001 Antarctic Press. No similarity to any character(s) and/or place(s) is intended, and any similarity is purely coincidental. Nothing from this book may be reproduced without the express written consent of the authors, except for purposes of review or promotion. *"[O]ctarine, the basic color of which all other colors are merely pale shadows impinging on normal four-dimensional space. It is said to be a sort of fluorescent greenish-yellow purple."* Printed by Brenner Printing, San Antonio, Texas, U.S.A.

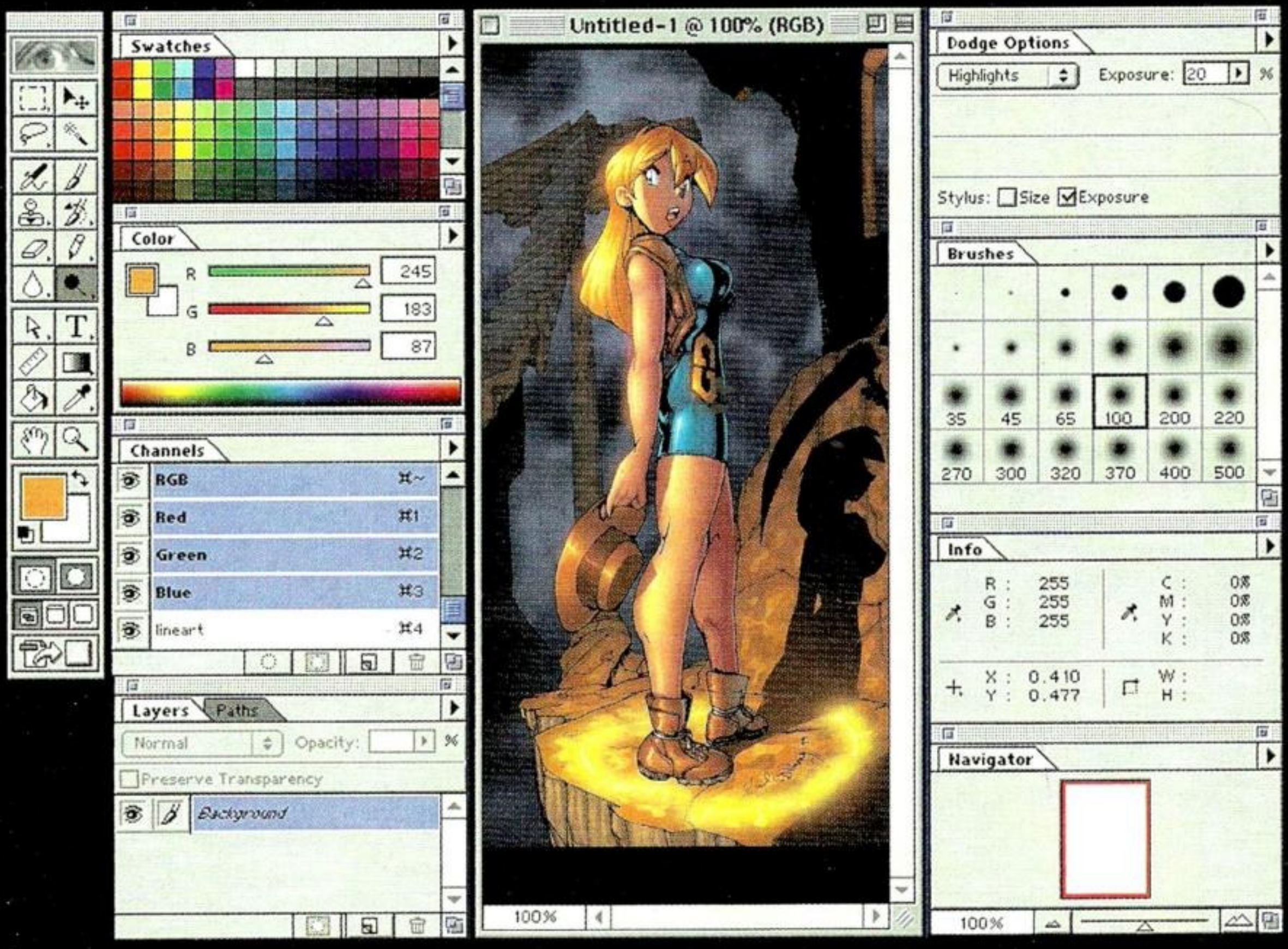
WHY PHOTOSHOP?

Although there are many illustration and photo-editing programs on the market today, Adobe Photoshop is arguably the best program to use for coloring comics. Its powerful photo-editing tools and its sheer versatility and ease of use make it the program of choice or the comic colorist. If we could find software that could exceed these qualities, we'd be using it. However, you can color with just about any type of photo-imaging software. Just be prepared to be either limited in tools, features, etc.

WHICH VERSION?

Any version of Photoshop from 3.0 up will definitely suffice. Early versions (2.5 and below) lack certain features that allow for specific tools and functions that coloring comics requires. Photoshop LE also suffers from the aforementioned shortcomings, so it is not recommended for the tasks presented in this book.

The Tools and Palettes of Photoshop 5.5, perhaps the most wisely used version of Photoshop on the market today.



As stated above, there are many versions of Photoshop that people have. With this in mind, we'll cover coloring with Photoshop in a manner with regards to most versions. This way, if you have version 4.0, you won't feel that this book is geared toward users of 5.0, etc. Photoshop has changed during the years, with new tools and palettes added for more versatility. However, the general look of Photoshop hasn't changed very much until the inception of version 6.0, which has eliminated the Option and Brush palettes and combined them into a long bar that merges with Photoshop's frame. So don't feel jaded no matter which version you have, since this book utilizes features that are in all the versions from 3.0 and up.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

MAC OR PC?

It really makes little difference; the MAC and PC debate will always rage. Photoshop works fine on both platforms, though most people in the field prefer a Mac.

HOW POWERFUL OF A SYSTEM DO I NEED?

Powerful machines always provide better results. A minimum for a Mac shouldn't dip lower than a 7100 with at least 64 megs of RAM (64 megs is the recommended minimum for using Photoshop on any platform), and a 233mhz processor for a PC is probably the lowest you'd ever want to attempt to use for Photoshop. However, if your machine has these minimums beat by miles, you'll be just fine.

SHOULD I USE A MOUSE OR A TABLET?

For coloring comics, a pressure-sensitive tablet is highly recommended over a mouse. A tablet allows you to digitally paint ten times more naturally and effectively than a mouse ever could. So a tablet is something you should have—not that you can't do it with a mouse, though it is far more difficult to produce the results you get with a pen. If you've got a trackball, good luck.

WHAT SIZE/TYPE OF MONITOR?

A good monitor is very important, especially if your work is destined for print. You need accurate settings in order to make sure the colors you are using are the colors that will get printed. It is wise to calibrate your monitor using either Adobe Gamma or your system's monitor calibration wizard inorder to get the truest and most accurate color settings. Any monitor size is sufficient, though, again, the larger the better. Two monitors is ideal, as you can devote one monitor to all your tools and menus while the other is specifically devoted to the image you are working on.

DO I NEED A ZIP DRIVE OR A CD BURNER?

These are important to have if you are going to transport your files anywhere or wish to archive them. A standard 3.5" floppy disc stores about 1.5 megs of information, and you'll find that many images you work on are way larger than this, even compressed. Also, since certain image files are large, you may want to archive them due to limited amount of space on your hard drive.

WHAT KIND OF SCANNER DO I NEED?

A scanner is very important, especially if you want an image to get on your computer by means other than from a disc or zip disc. Standard scanners that have 8.5x 11 scanning area with a minimum of 300x300 dpi resolution are just fine, though ones with larger image areas and higher dpi res are highly recommended.

HOW MUCH MEMORY SHOULD I HAVE?

As stated above, RAM is the single largest asset to Photoshop. The more RAM you have, the quicker Photoshop will process every type of procedure you do. Images, because of their often high resolution, take up a great deal of space and are usually the biggest single type of file that you'll have on your computer.

The higher the resolution, the larger the file and the longer it takes your processor working in conjunction with your memory to access it. When using Photoshop, allocate at least 75% of your system's RAM to it. It is also recommended that you use Photshop by itself, especially if you don't have much memory, and close any other program you may have open. This way, your computer's memory will primarily be focused on Photoshop alone. It is always good to have as much memory as possible. Today it is perhaps the most inexpensive way to dramatically increase your system's perfomance. The newer versions of PS require a minimum of 64 MB to do efficiently the tasks that it is capable of.

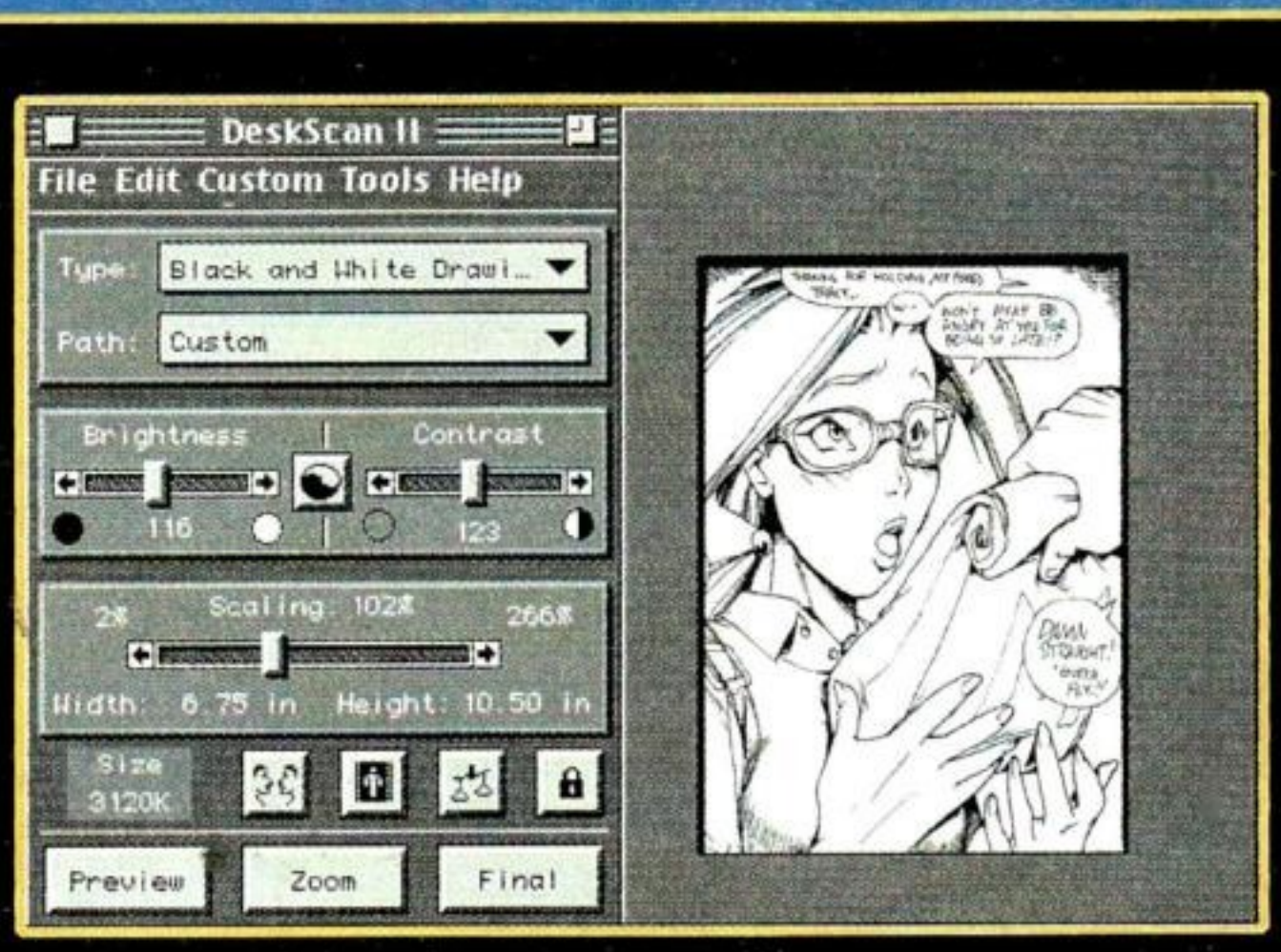
SCANNING

The first approach is to scan an image of line art to be colored. Standard comic book pages in their original form are usually about 10x15in. If you have a scanner that is large enough to scan that, be proud. Most people don't. So you can either scan the piece in sections, which is time-consuming and difficult, or you can make a crisp and clear photocopy of the art to be scanned. Reduce the image by 64% while copying on 8.5 x11in. paper and lay it face down on your scanner.

Most scanners have a preview feature that allows you to see the image before you commit it to scanning, which allows you to frame the desired area to be scanned. Set your frame to 6.75x10.5in and set your mode to Bitmap/Black and White Drawing at 600 dpi, then scan the image.

TO SCAN:

1. Place artwork on your flatbed scanner
2. Set you scan setting to Bitmap/ Black and White Drawing
3. Set the scan resolution to 600 dpi
4. PREVIEW the image
5. Adjust your Marquee to approx. 6.75x10.5in.
6. Center Marquee around desired image
7. Scan image



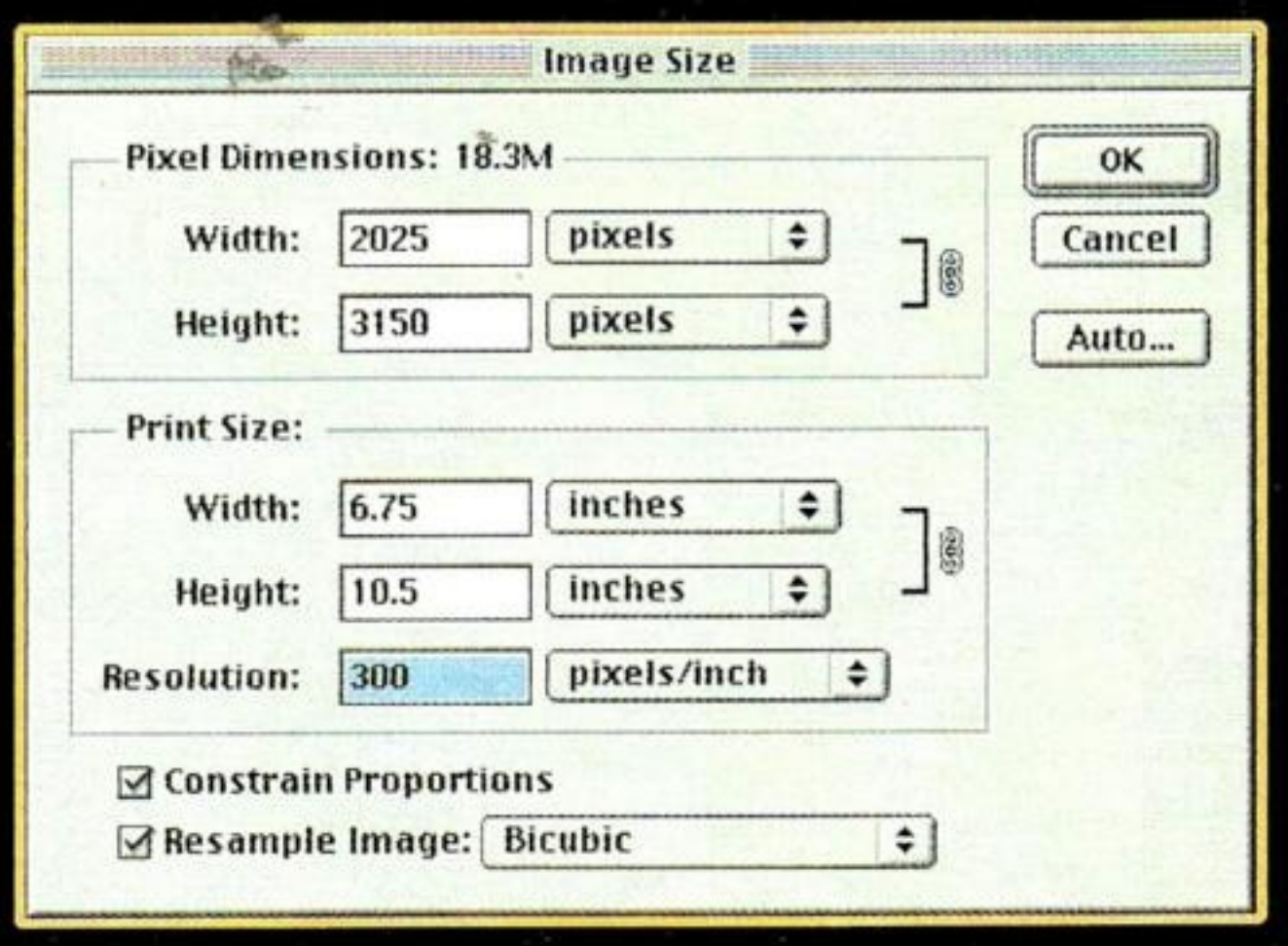
Now that you have the image in Photoshop, you can adjust your proportions and lower the dpi.

TO CONVERT:

1. Go to Menu->Image->Image Size
2. Check the proportions of your image
3. Change the dpi from 600 to 300
4. Go to Menu->Mode->convert art from Bitmap to Grayscale
4. Go to Menu->Mode->convert art from Grayscale to RGB

*keep the proportions 1 to 1

5. Save file



Scanning line art at 600 dpi and then "bumping" it down to 300 dpi will allow you to retain a greater degree of detail in regards to your linework.
Working at a 300 dpi resolution is ideal, especially if your work is destined for print, since any lower dpi will probably make the art itself look "fuzzy."
Working at a higher dpi only makes the job harder, since your file size will be enormous and your computer will have a slower time processing your tasks.

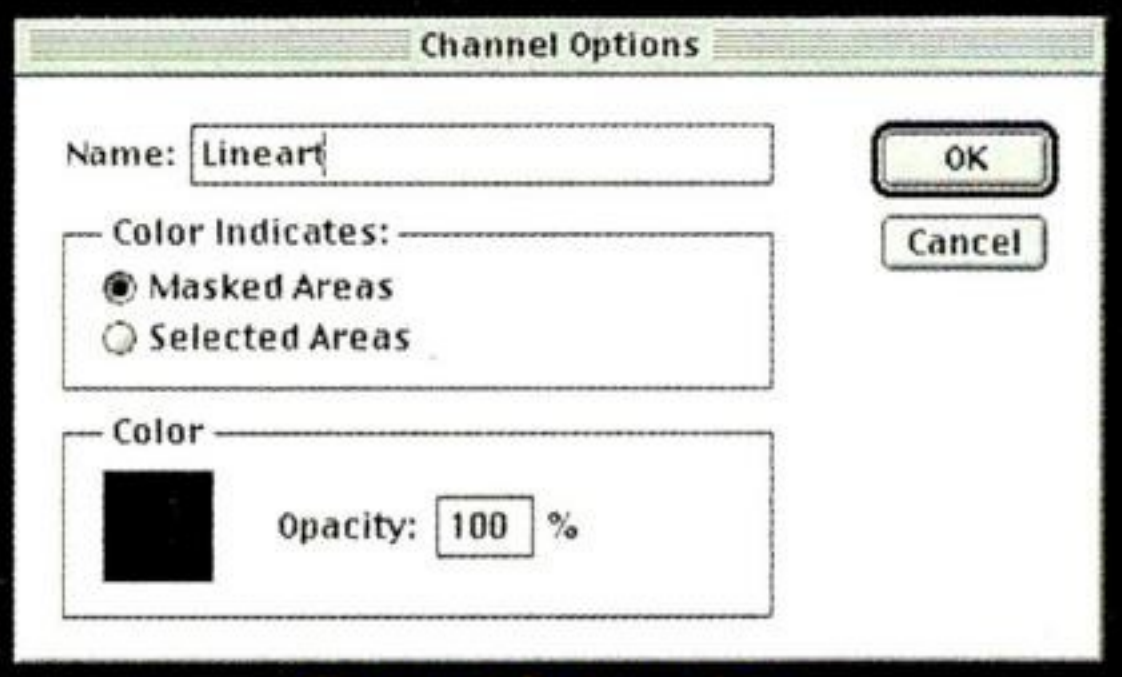
WORKING IN CHANNELS

Channels are image components that hold pixel information for an individual color. Grayscale images have one channel, RGB images have three, and CMYK images contain four channels. The technique we use to color illustrations is by way of using a single layer with three RGB channels and one addition channel used to contain the line art of the illustration. We have found this way very user-friendly and quite efficient, as opposed to using multiple layers of color, which use up a tremendous amount of your computer's physical RAM. It may seem like a strange approach as opposed to using layers, but you'll discover that utilizing the flexibility of channels is incredibly effective

MAKING A LINEART CHANNEL:

1. Go to Menu->Edit->Select All
2. Go to Menu->Edit->Copy
3. Go to Menu->Edit->Cut
4. Go to Channels Palette_> New Channel
5. The New Channel box should appear. The setting should read: Channel name:#4 or Alpha Color:BLACK: 100% Click OK
6. Go to Menu->Edit->Paste
7. SAVE

Bitmapped line art



Channel Options box

Channel Palette

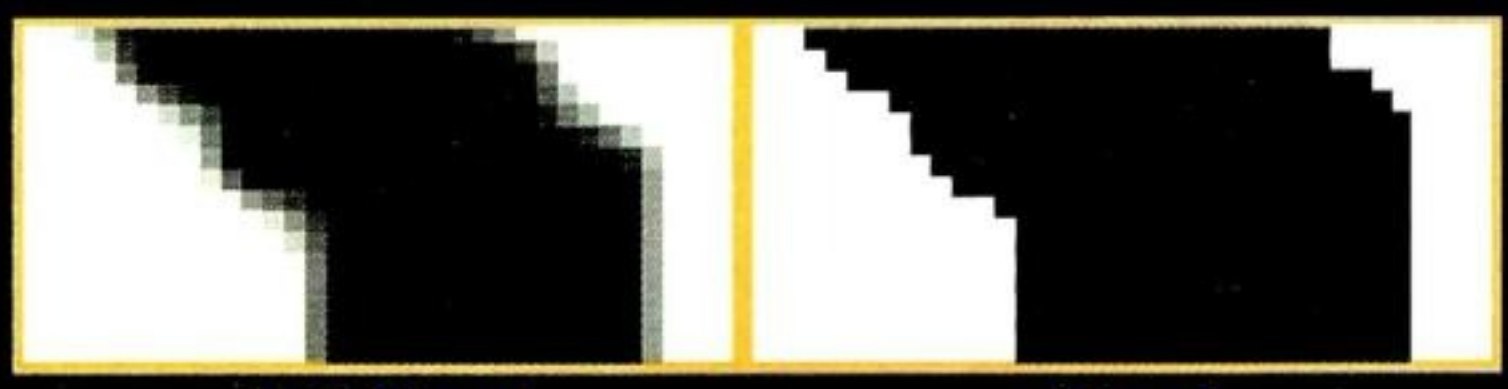
Now you have a seperate channel for all your color rendering and another one that contains your line art. Note that you can only work on one channel at a time and that the Red, Green, and Blue channels should not be highlighted separately, but as a whole along with the top RGB channel.

TOGGLING CHANNELS

When work from color channel to line art channel, you can toggle between them by utilizing the keyboard shortcut listed to the right of the channel instead of physically using your pointer to access them each time you need to do so.

ALIAS vs. ANTI-ALIAS

Anti-aliased artwork has a smoothed edge to it, as opposed to non-anti-aliased art, which has a hard, jaggied edge.



Anti-Aliased

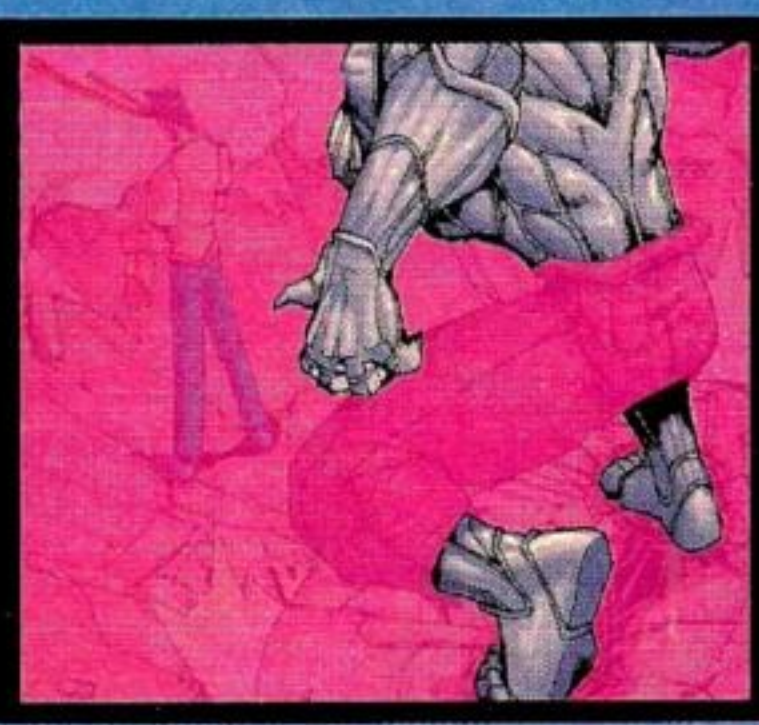
Aliased

SAVING SELECTIONS:

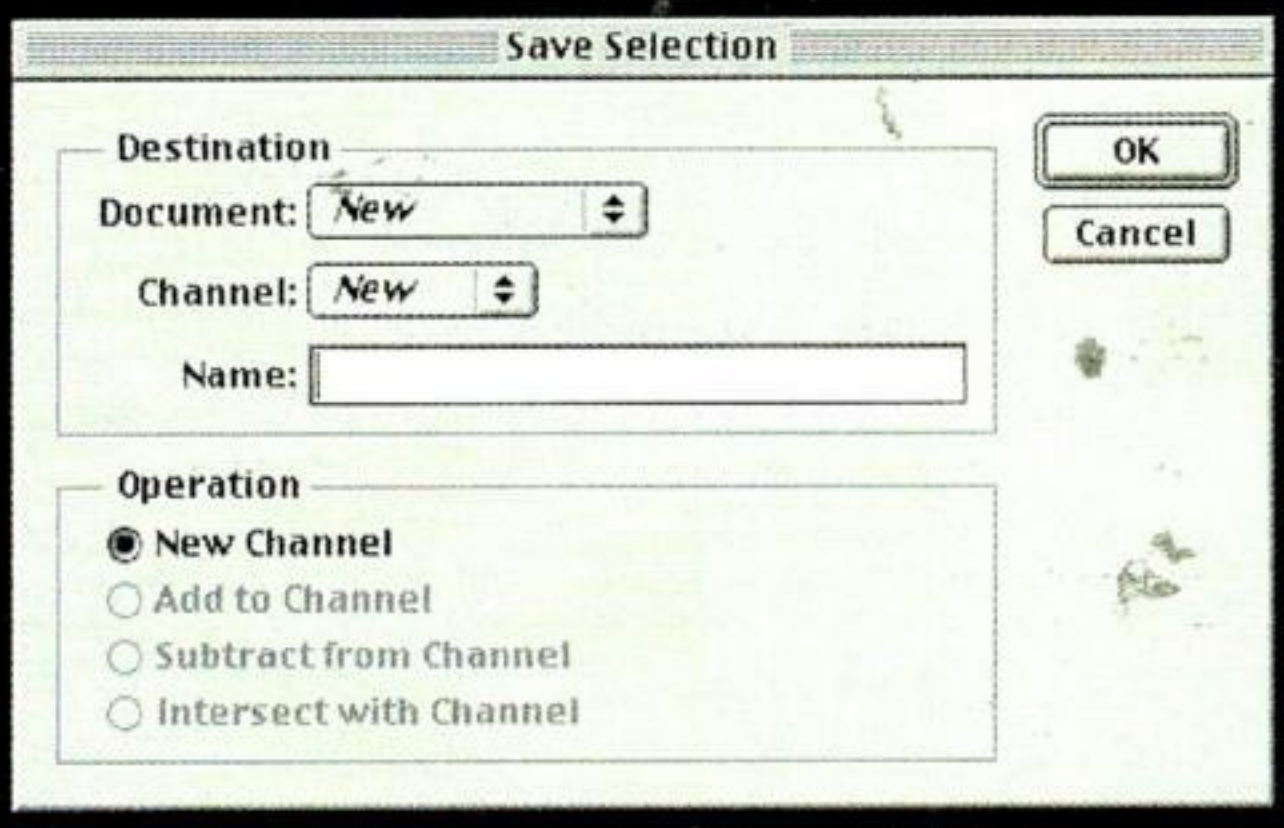
When you are rendering images, you oftentimes run into areas that you have to go back and change. You can either go back and try to wand or lasso the area again, which in some cases may take a lot of time, or you can save the area you've selected as a channel, a quick and easy solution that will allow you to use your selection as many times as you want.

Non-Selected art

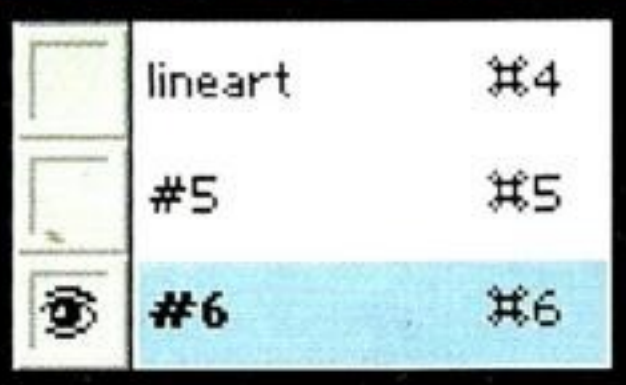
Areas selected



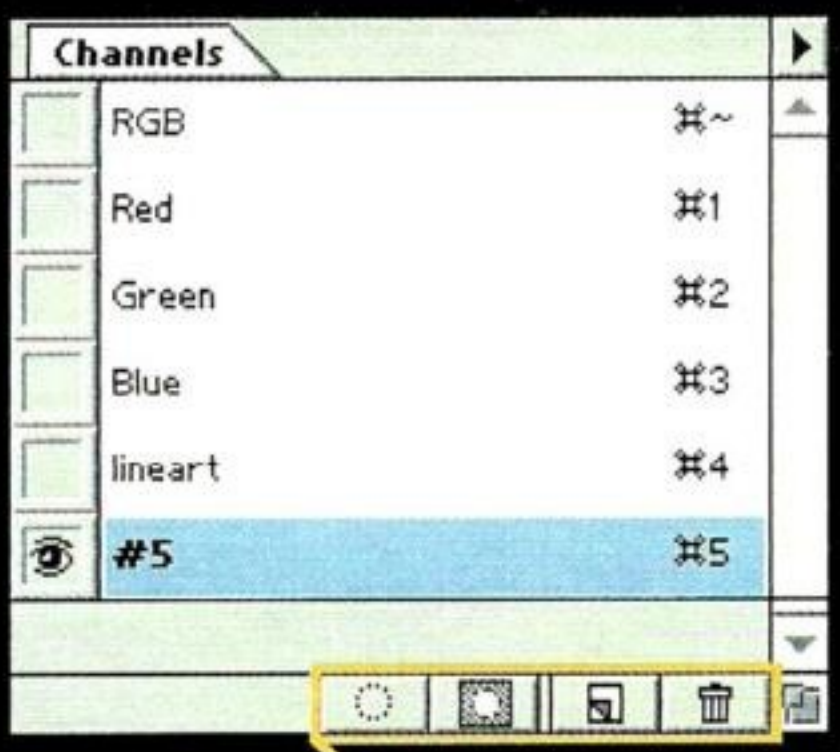
Areas selected
(Quick-Mask mode)



1.Make your selection(s)
2.Menu->Select->Save Selection
3.Check your settings
(see left image)
4.Click OK
5.Your selection is now a channel
(see below image)

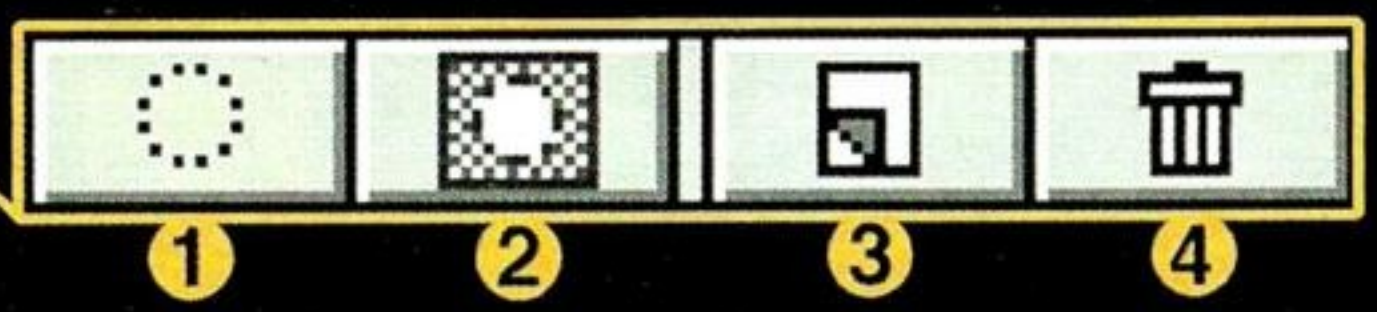


CHANNEL PALETTE BUTTONS:



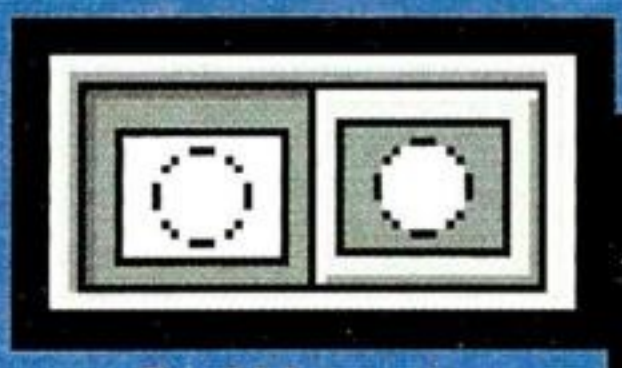
The Channels Palette dispays all of the channels you have in a given image. Located on the bottom is a series of buttons which enables you to easily use your channels.

1.LOADS your channel as a selection
2.SAVES selection as a channel
3.CREATES a new channel
4.DELETES your current channel



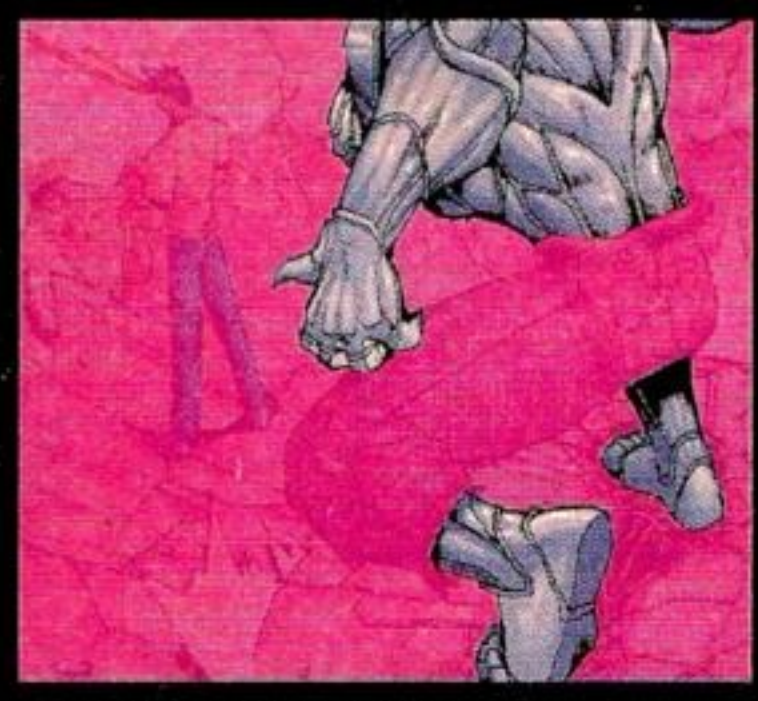
QUICK MASK

Quick Mask works in conjunction with your selection. Oftentimes, multiple selections are confusing. Quick Mask allows you to view the areas you have selected clearly so that you can see what you may have missed.



On ALL versions of Photoshop with Quick Mask, all you need to do is select an area and press Q to get into Quick Mask mode.

AREAS SELECTED

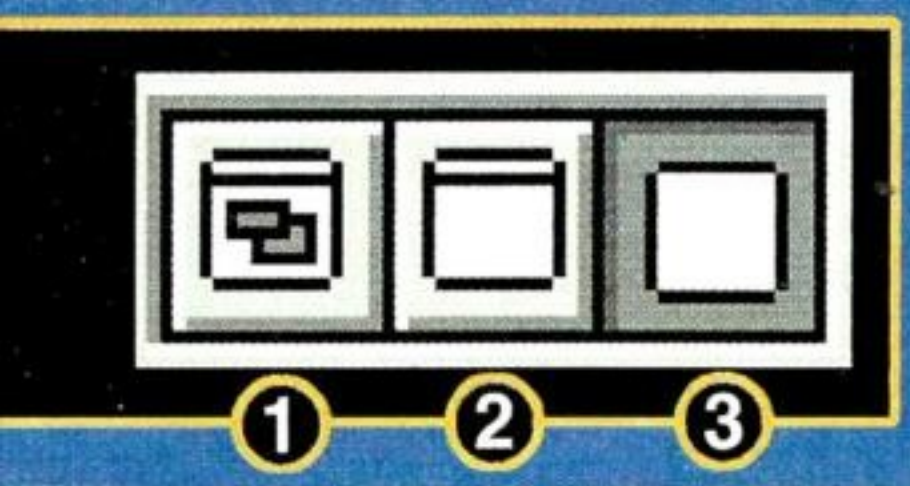


AREAS SELECTED In QUICK MASK mode.

TIP! **While in Quick Mask, you can change the color and opacity of your mask. Also, you can edit your mask by using the lasso tool, airbrush, and gradient tools set to default colors.**

SCREEN MODES

There are 3 different ways you can display your screen in Photoshop. It's up to the user to determine which one works best.

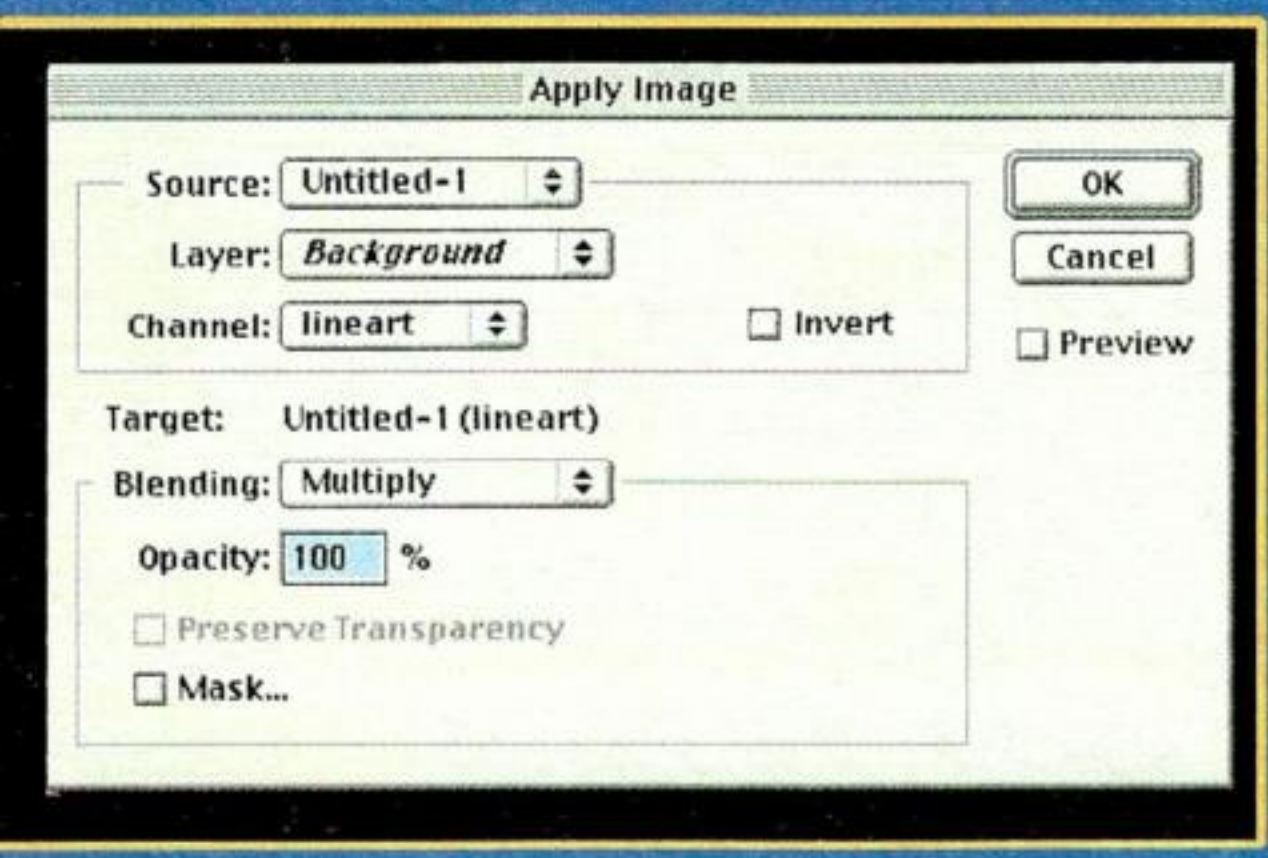


1. **Puts IMAGE in a standard window with MENU Bar present**
2. **Makes image Full-screen with the MENU Bar**
3. **Makes image Full-screen with no MENU Bar**

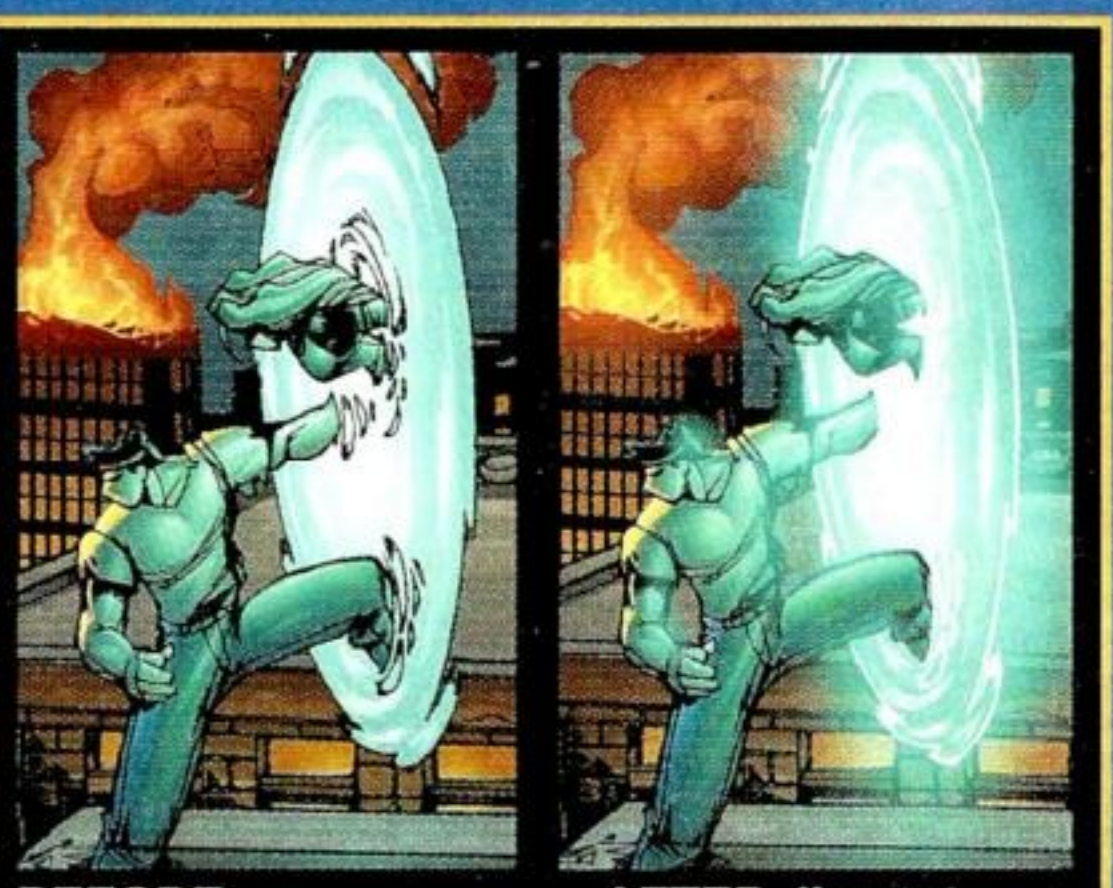
They can be toggled between using the F key in every version of Photoshop.

APPLYING THE IMAGE

In order to finish your piece, you must flatten the line art channel into the RGB channel. This will allow you to complete your piece and add additional effects. After Applying your channels, you can dump all your additional channels and save the art for print.



1. **Menu->Image->Apply Image**
2. **Use these settings:**
   Layer: Background
   Channel: (your line art channel)
   Blending: Multiply
   Opacity: 100%
3. **Apply image and dump your remaining channels**



BEFORE...

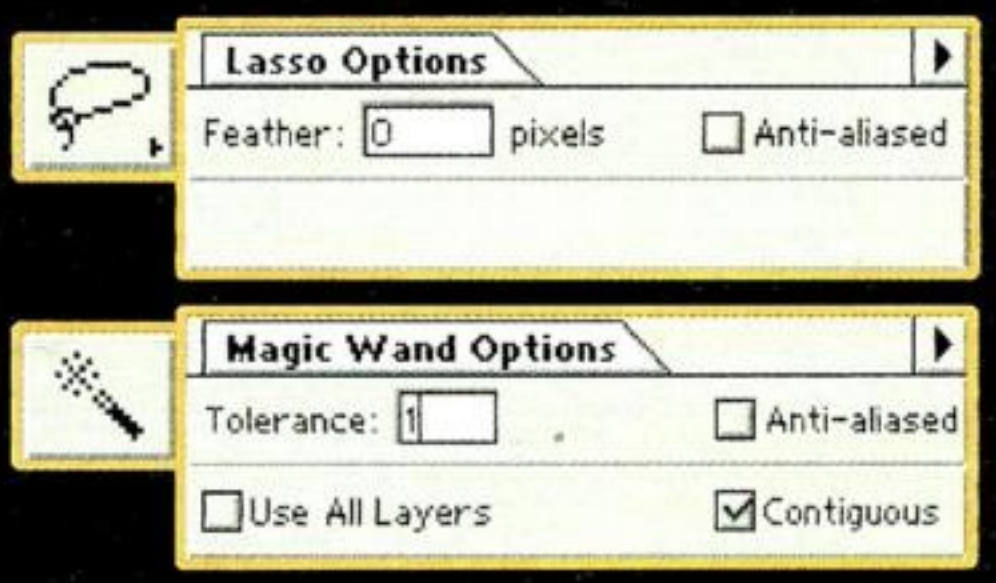
...AFTER, line art channel is applied.

TIP! **Only do glow effects after you apply your image so that your lineart is affected along with your color rendering.**

FLATLAYING

The laying of flats is perhaps the most important stage in computer coloring. What you are essentially doing is laying down the flat colors which will be selected and rendered during the coloring stage. The key is to separate objects from one another using areas of flat color. The more thorough the flats are, the easier it is to render them later. It is wise to lay "clean" areas of color, meaning a tight separation between colors with minimal gaps of color in between. (This will be explained more visually later.)

Lasso and Wand tool settings for laying Flats:



LASSO/WAND TOOLS

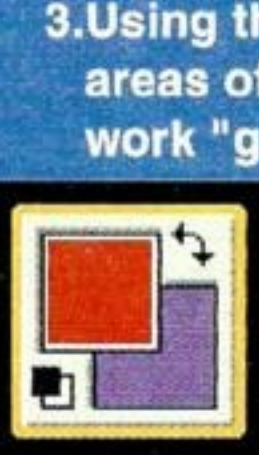
The most important tools in computer coloring, these tools allow you to render color in controlled, selected areas:

The Lasso lets you make freehand selections. When feathered, the edges of the selection are faded in accordance to the number of pixels you set.

The (Magic) Wand allows you to select areas of color. The Tolerance setting determines the selecting of pixel range, tones darker and lighter, based on the specified number.

LAYING THE FLATS

1.In the RGB channel: Go to Menu->Select->Select All
2.Drop in a base tone in which to lay colors over.
3.Using the lasso, begin tracing shapes and dropping in areas of color to separate the images. Remember to work "general to specific."



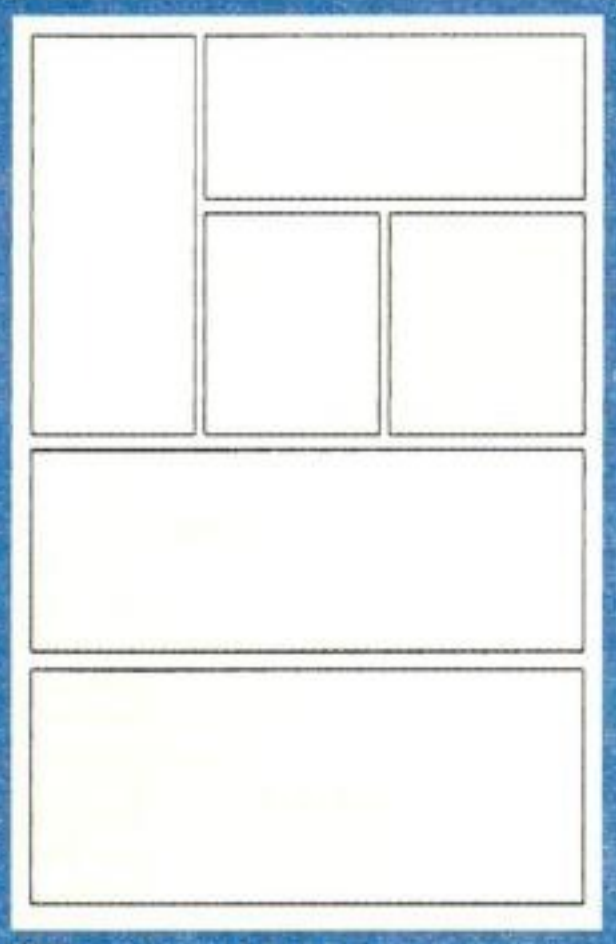
To drop in a color in a selected area, choose a color, then hit X. The chosen color will go to the bottom of the Default color box. Then you simply press the Delete key, and the bottom color will be dropped into your selected area.

TIP! **When lassoing line art, try to trace in the center of the actual lines. This will give you color areas that "stay within the lines."**

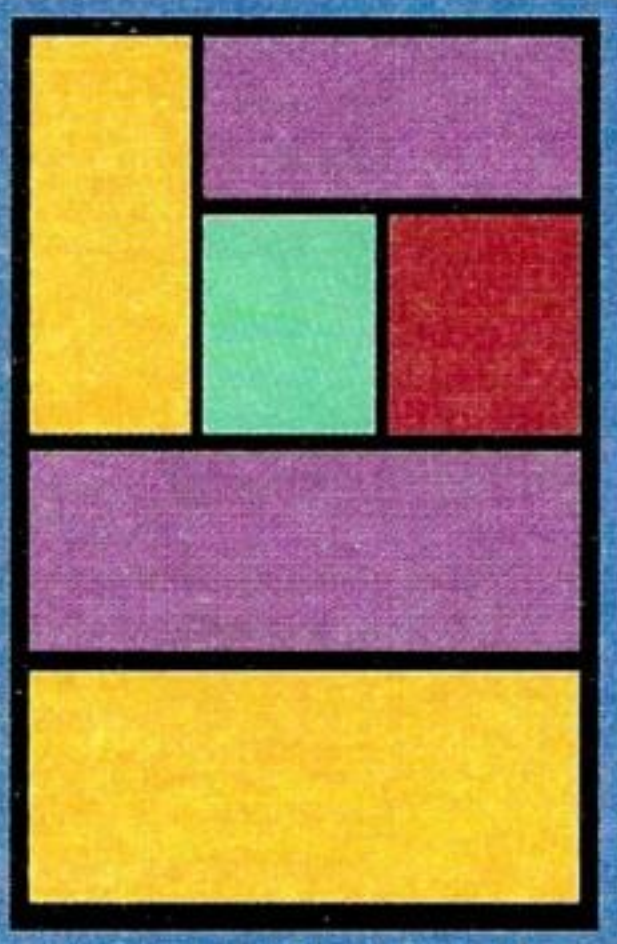
TIP! **"Constraining" your lasso selections is far easier than "freeform" lasso selecting.**

Constrained

Freeform



When working on a page of a comic book...



...separate your panels and gutters first.

Drop in a BASE TONE

Separate the foreground from the background...

Start to separate large elements...

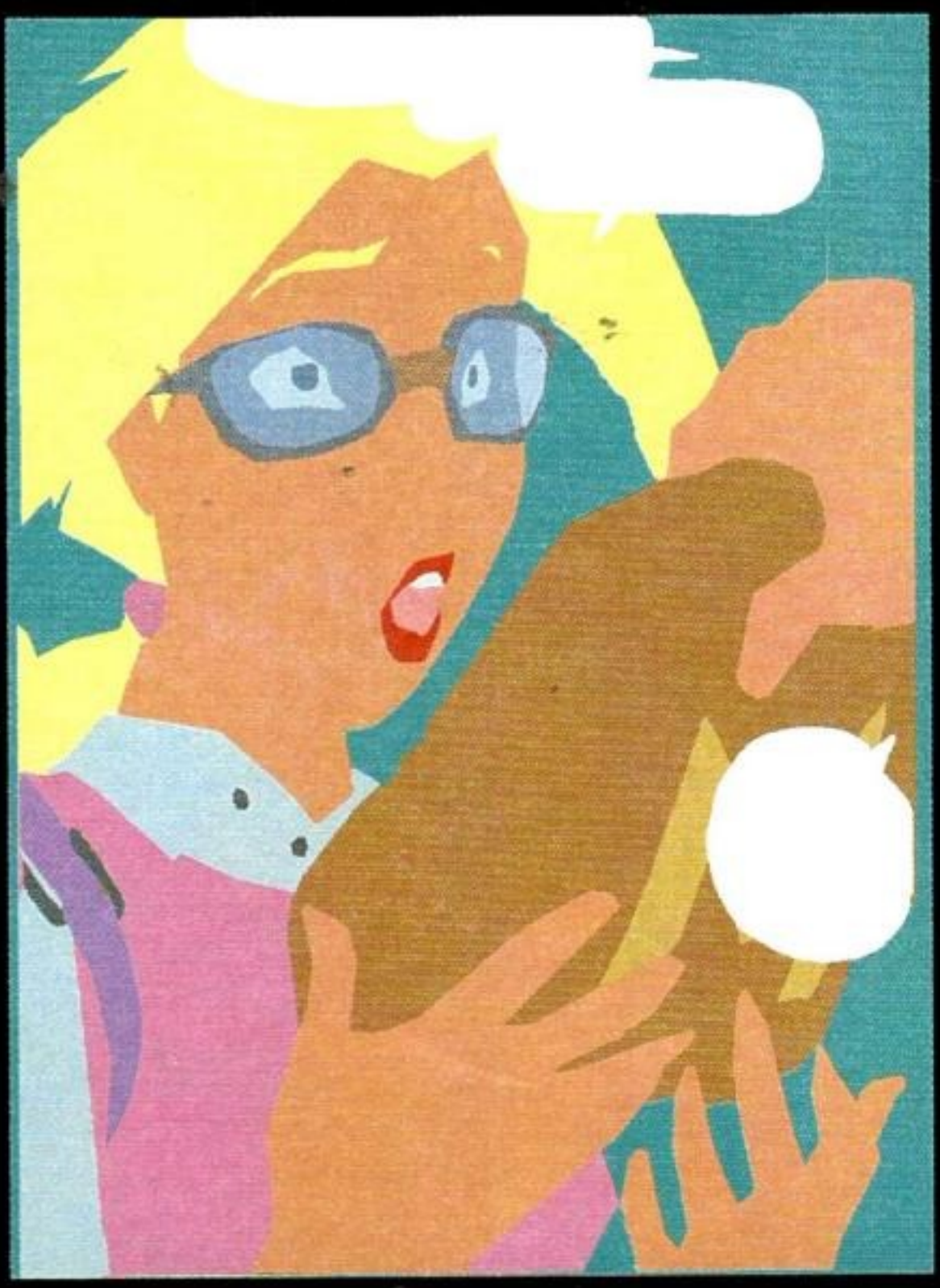
...then separate even smaller elements...

...then finish with the remaining details.

TIP! The better colors you choose initially to lay flats, the better, though you can use any colors at first and simply wand the specific color(s) later and adjust them accordingly.

TIP! Use the Pencil tool to fix minor selection errors.

The finished flats, color-adjusted and ready for rendering...



The finished flats with the line art channel hidden. Periodically viewing your flats this way while you lay them will help you maintain a tight color separation.

TIP! Overlap your selections into a previous color selection and then, using your wand, subtract from the area of color for a tight color fit. (see next page)

DESELECTING COLOR AREAS DURING FLATLAYING

Select a shape into another color...

(QUICK-MASK view)

With the line art hidden, you can see that...

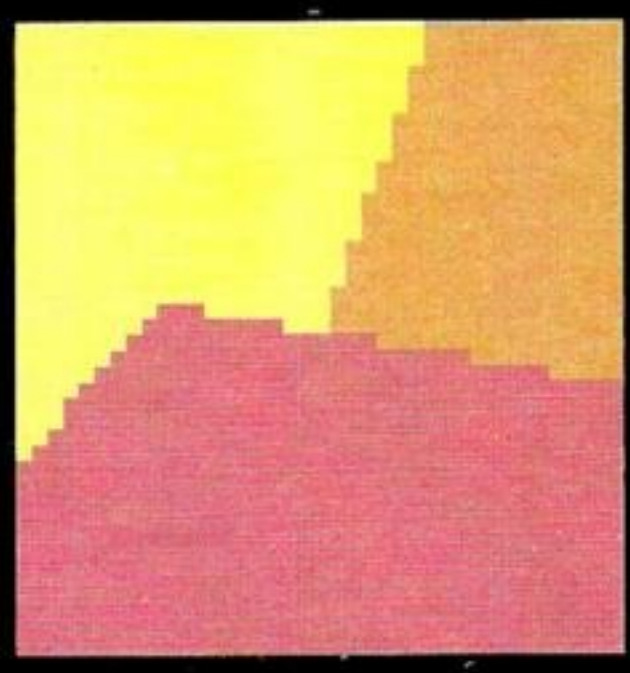
...the colors are separate. Deselect the other color with your wand...

...and drop in a color.

Continue the same process with other elements...

(QUICK-MASK view)

This technique used in the Color channel is not only time-saving, but will give you the tightest flats. With practice, you'll find this technique very rewarding.



KEEPING IT TIGHT...

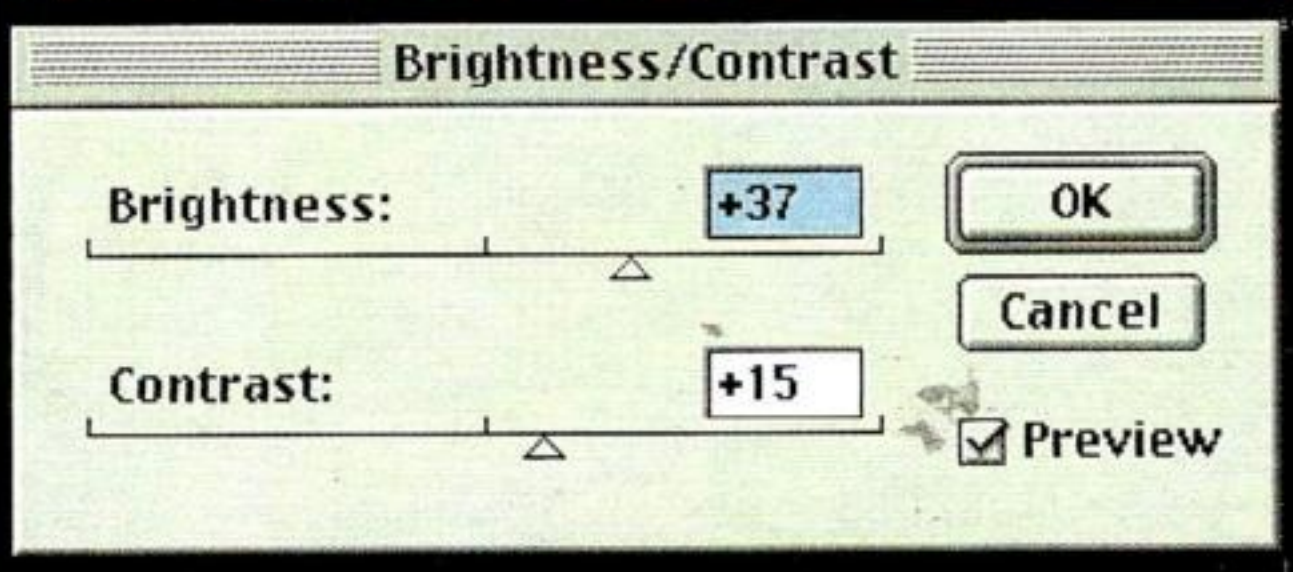
Having tight color separations is key; it allows for easier and less frustrating selecting of areas.

COLORING TOOLS

Coloring comics utilizes basically every tool Photoshop has to offer. Obviously, some tools are used far more than most. The Wand, Lasso, and Airbrush tools are used in basically every step of coloring. The Image->Adjust Menu also contains a great deal of color adjustment features that are used quite often to tweak your colors. Here we will take a look at the tools used most frequently to apply and manipulate colors for rendering comics.

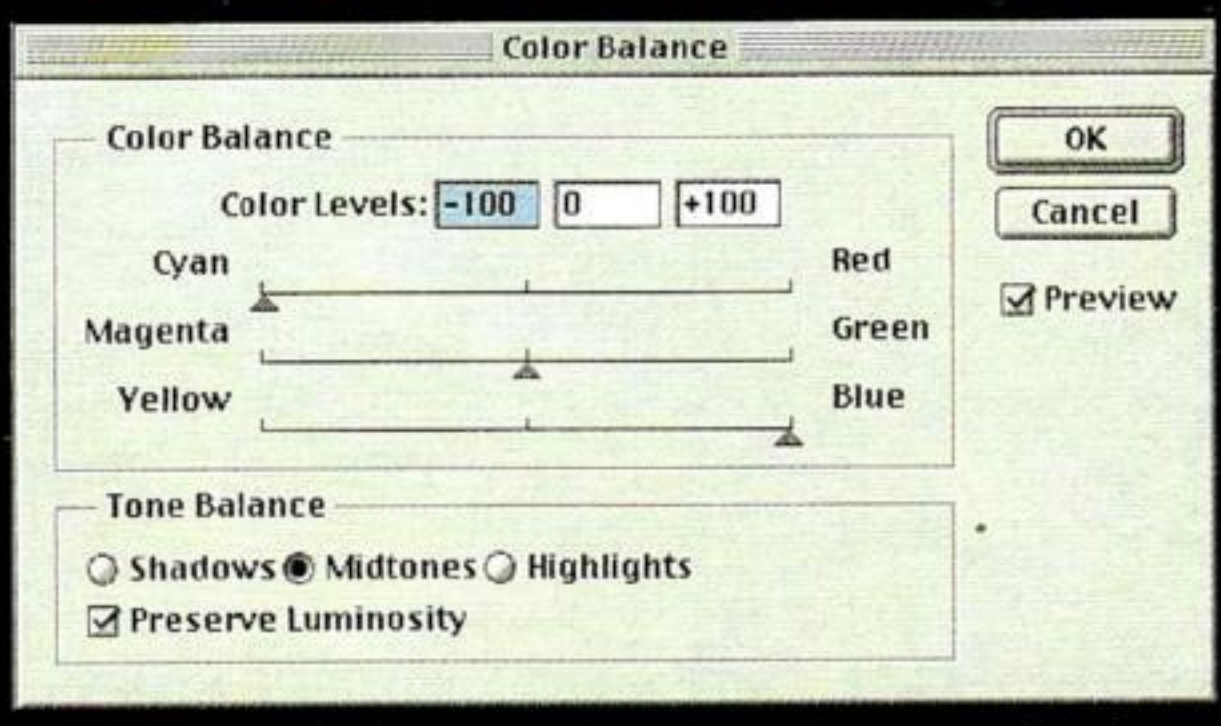
IMAGE ADJUSTMENT:

BRIGHTNESS/CONTRAST



Just as it says, it brightens and contrasts a selected image in either positive or negative values. It works best when the sliders are used conjunction with one another.

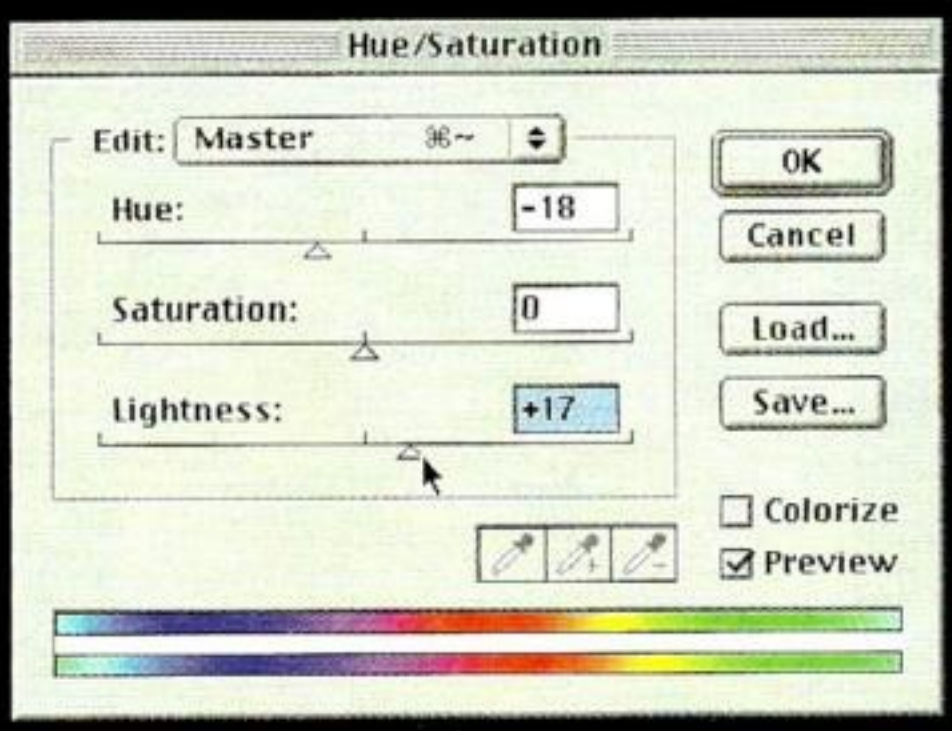
COLOR BALANCE



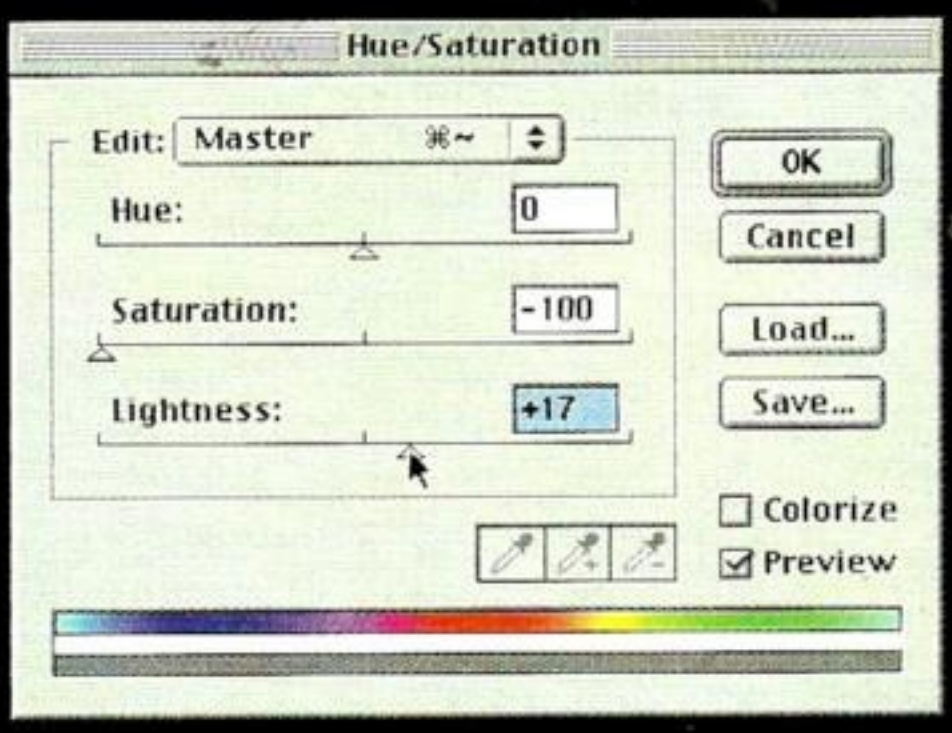
These add varying degrees of color to selected areas. This helps produce a variety of distinct colors for you to utilize while rendering.

IMAGE ADJUSTMENT: HUE/SATURATION

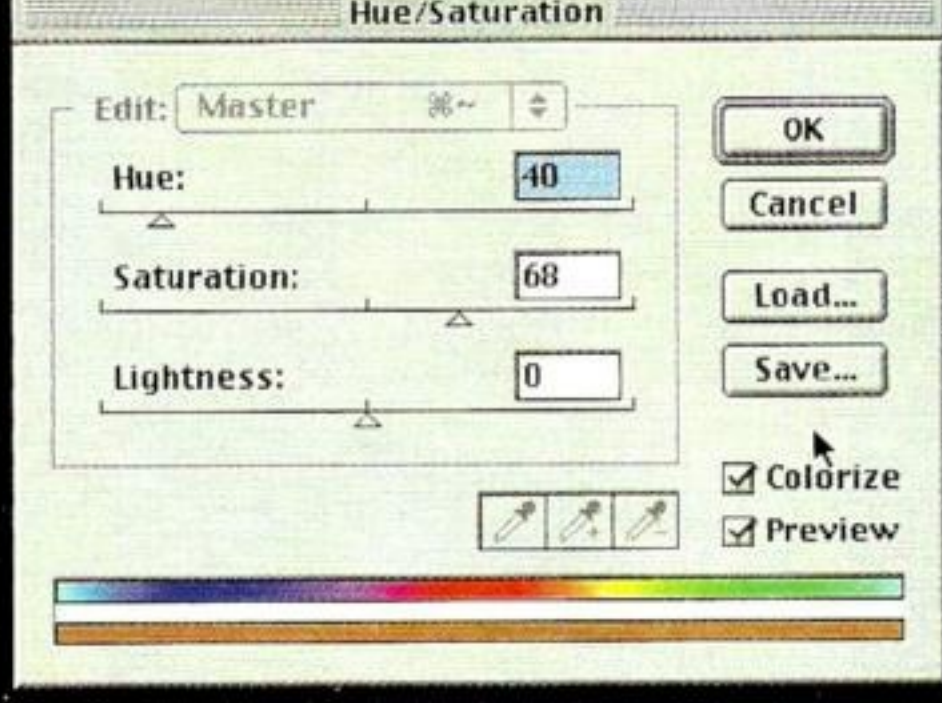
Menu->Image->Adjust...



The Hue/Saturation Menu is used to create many different types of color changes. Oftentimes, very dramatic colors can be produced using the 3 sliders in unison.



Saturation controls how much of a color percentage is added to a color. Sliding it to the left of center will desaturate the color, adding more tones of gray.



The Colorize option allows you to unify all selected colors into one specific color of varying shades/tones.

HUE ADJUST

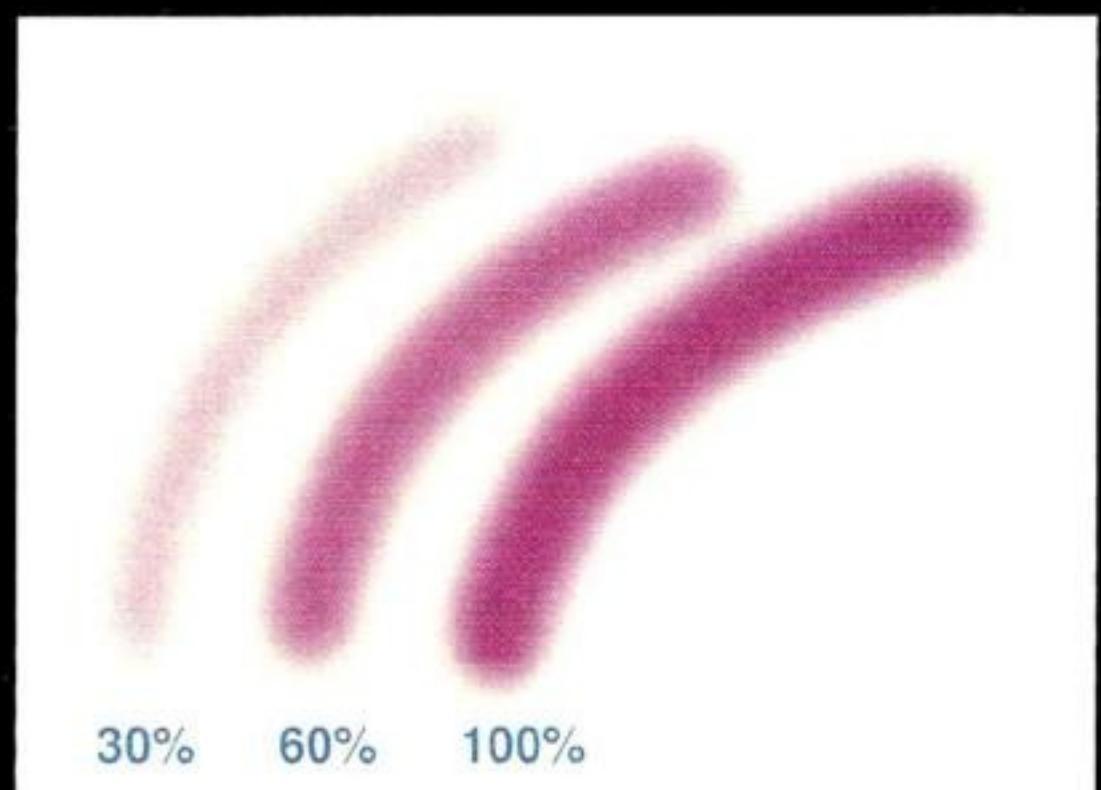
DESATURATE

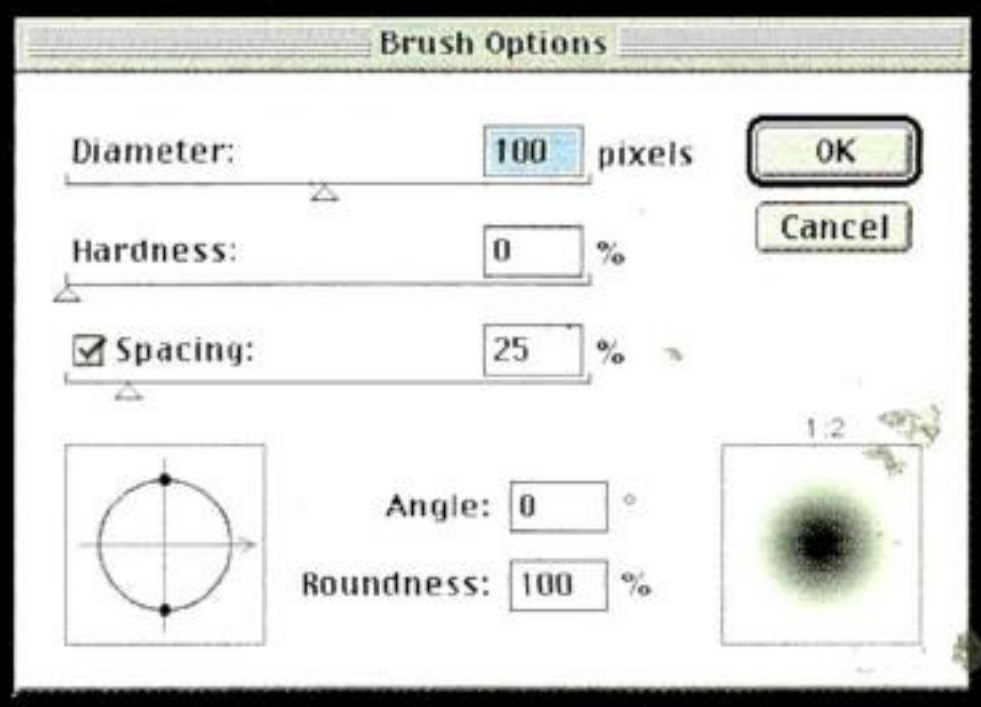
COLORIZE

AIRBRUSH

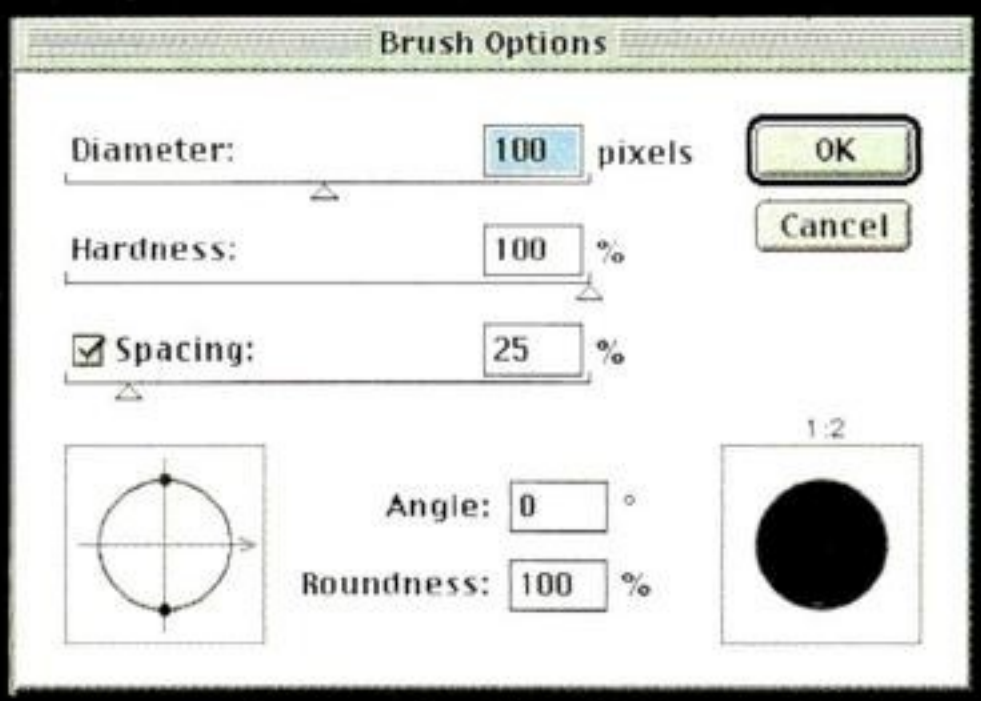
The Airbrush tool is perhaps the single most important tool that you'll use in Photoshop. It is pressure-sensitive and infinite types of brushes can be created for it to apply color.

The Option palette for the Airbrush. 3 different pressure settings are pictured to the right.



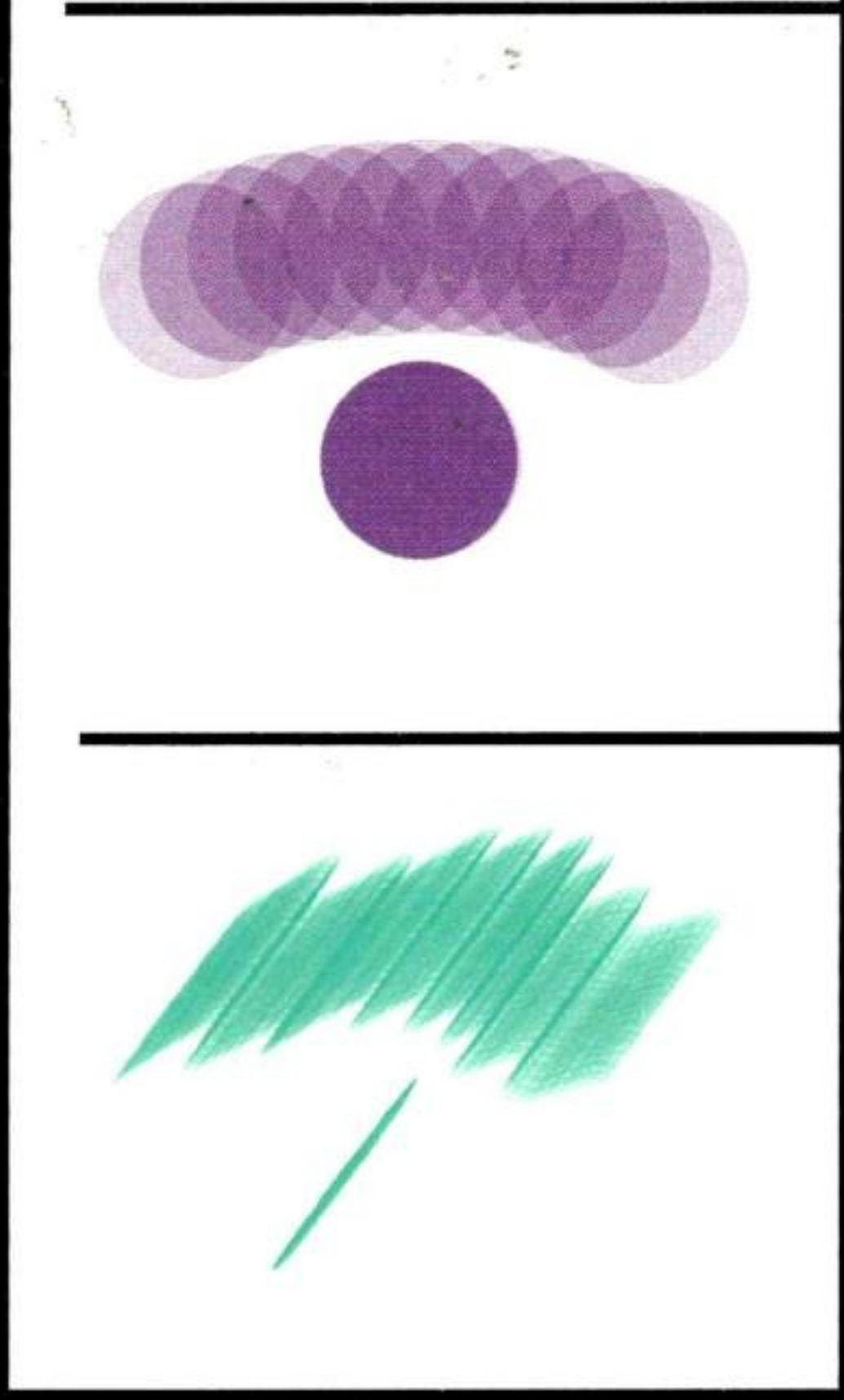


As pictured here, the Brush Options are virtually limitless...



...can be used with all the rendering tools that utilize brush size...

...and can take on a variety of shapes and sizes (up to 999 pixels).

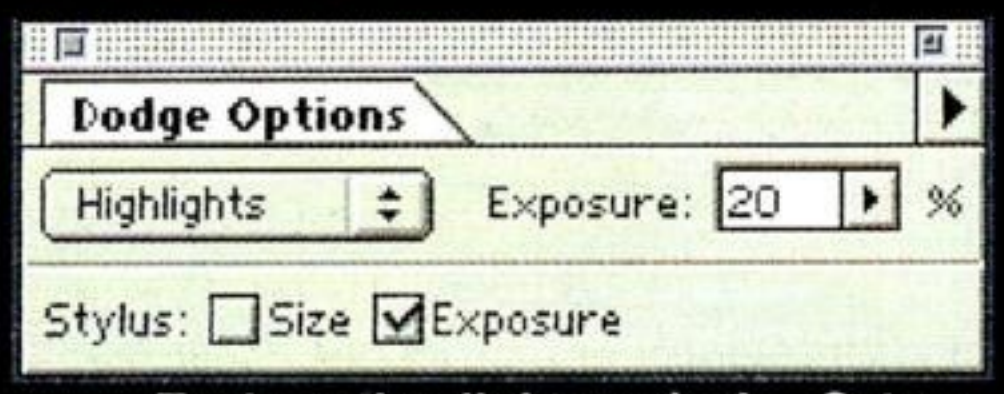


TONING/BLUR/ SMUDGE TOOLS

These tools are used to create very specific pixel color effects. It's key to use them sparingly for particular circumstances.

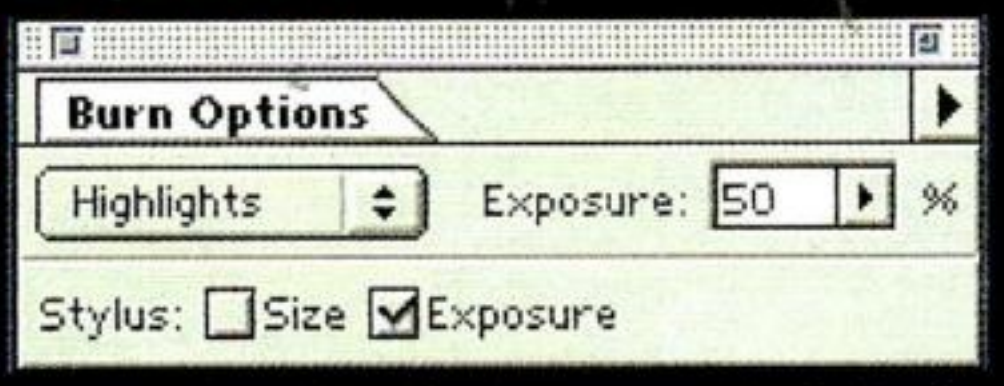
ORIGINAL

DODGE

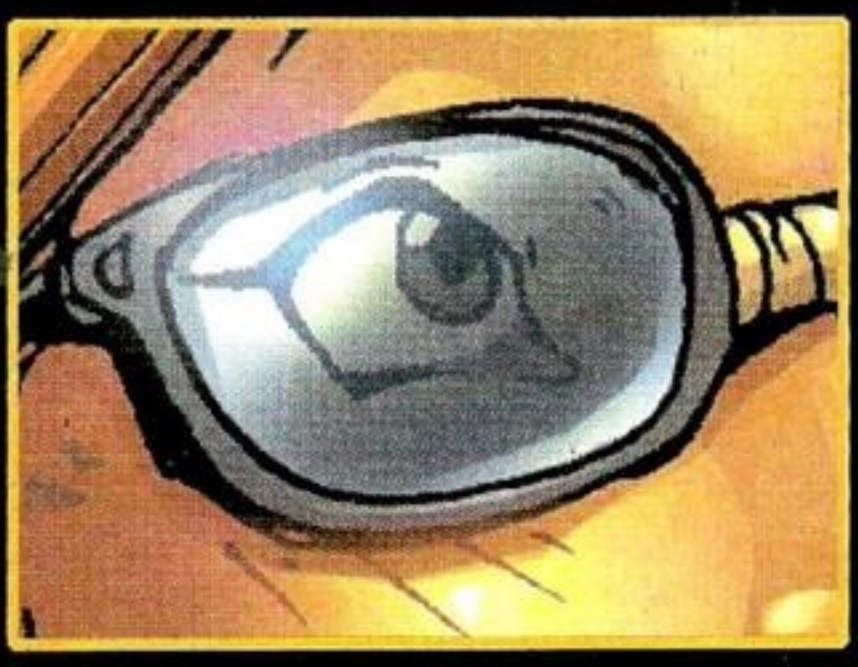


Tool used to lighten pixels. Set on "highlight," it brightens a pixel area dramatically.

BURN

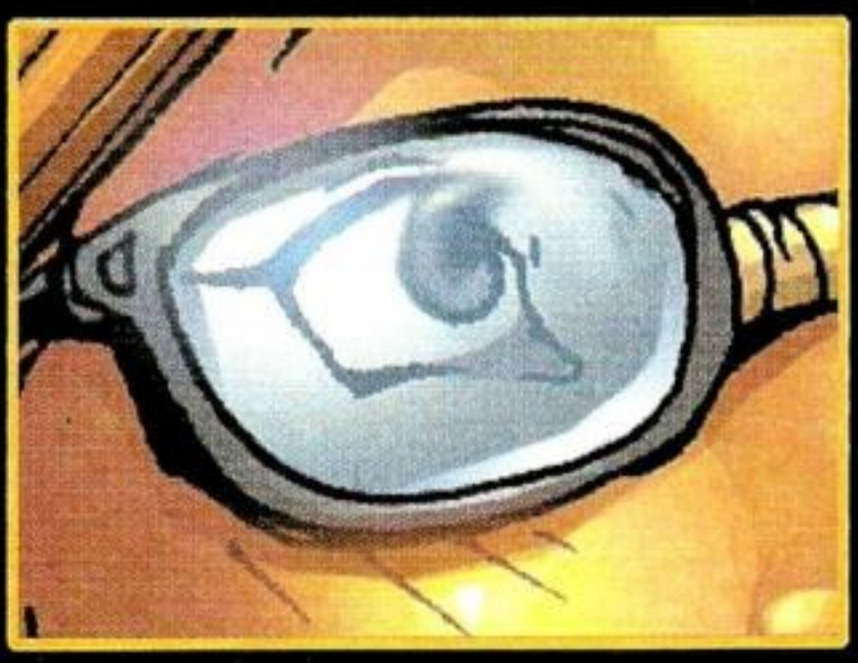


Tool used to darken an area of pixels. Like the Dodge tool, it has 3 settings.

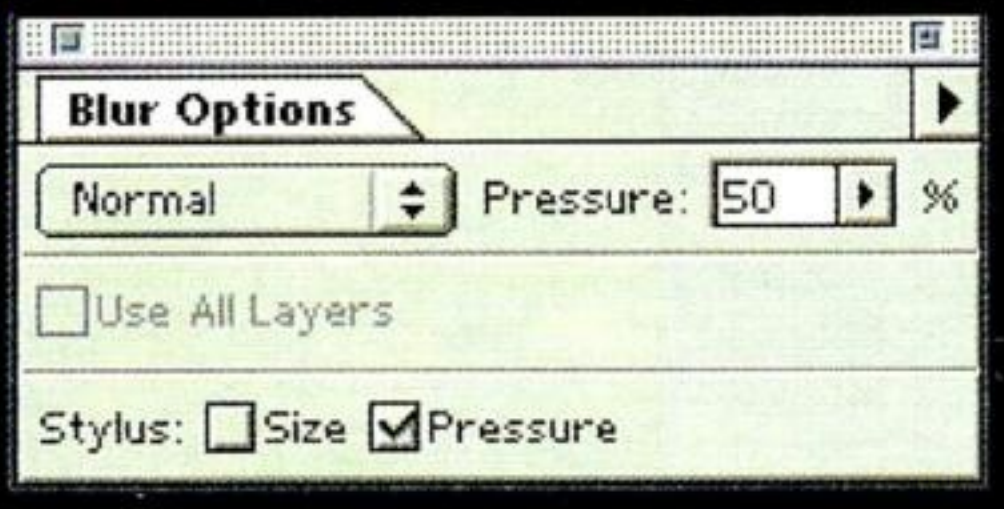


SMUDGE

Tool used to smudge and pull an area of pixels.



BLUR

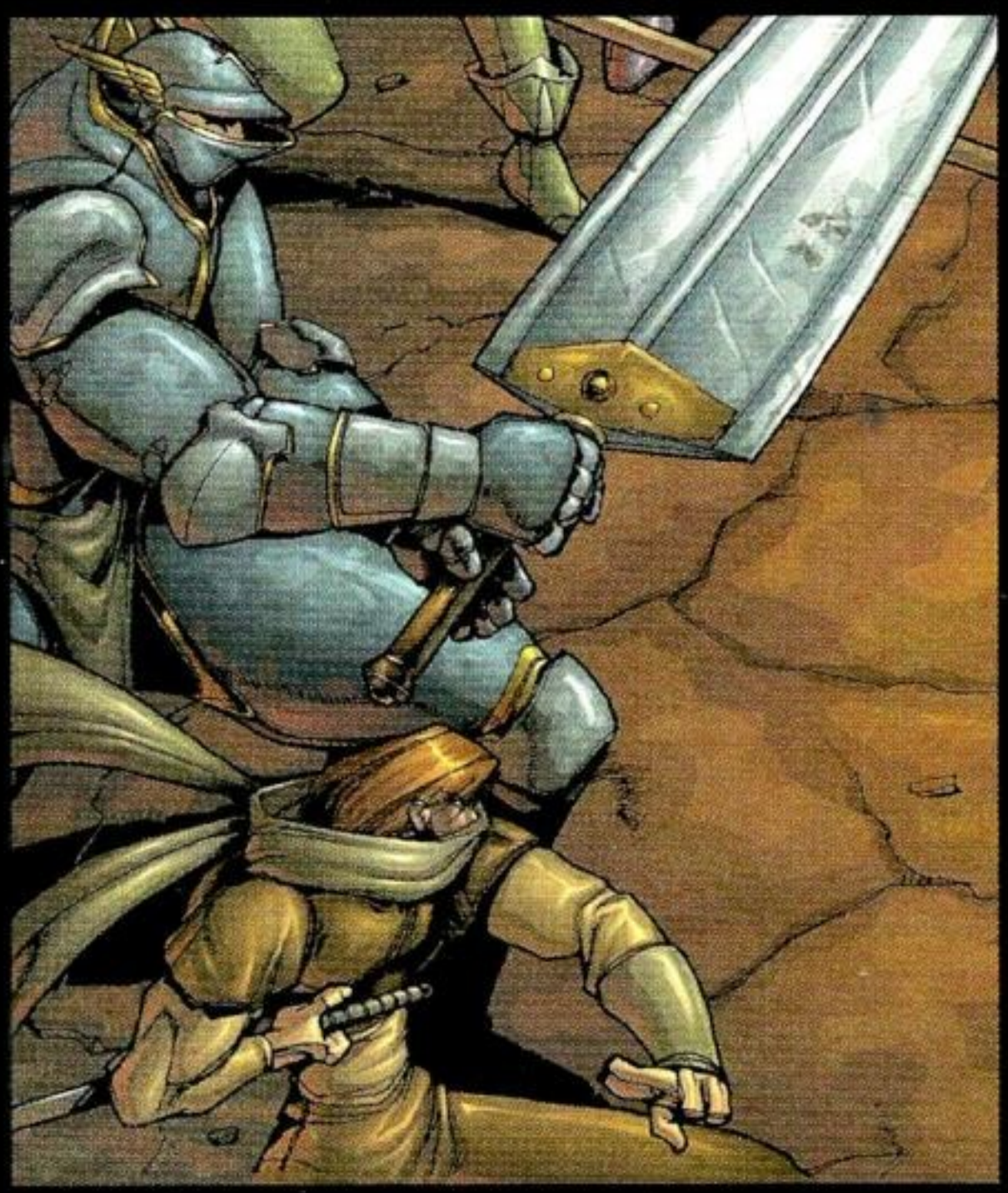


A tool that blurs a pixel area.

RENDERING STYLES

HARDEDGE AIRBRUSH

The hardedge airbrush style is a process of rendering utilizing the Airbrush in conjunction with selections made with the Lasso tool. This allows for greater control and precision over your rendering. Here are some examples of this style. Note the hard edges of the selections in combination with the soft airbrush strokes.

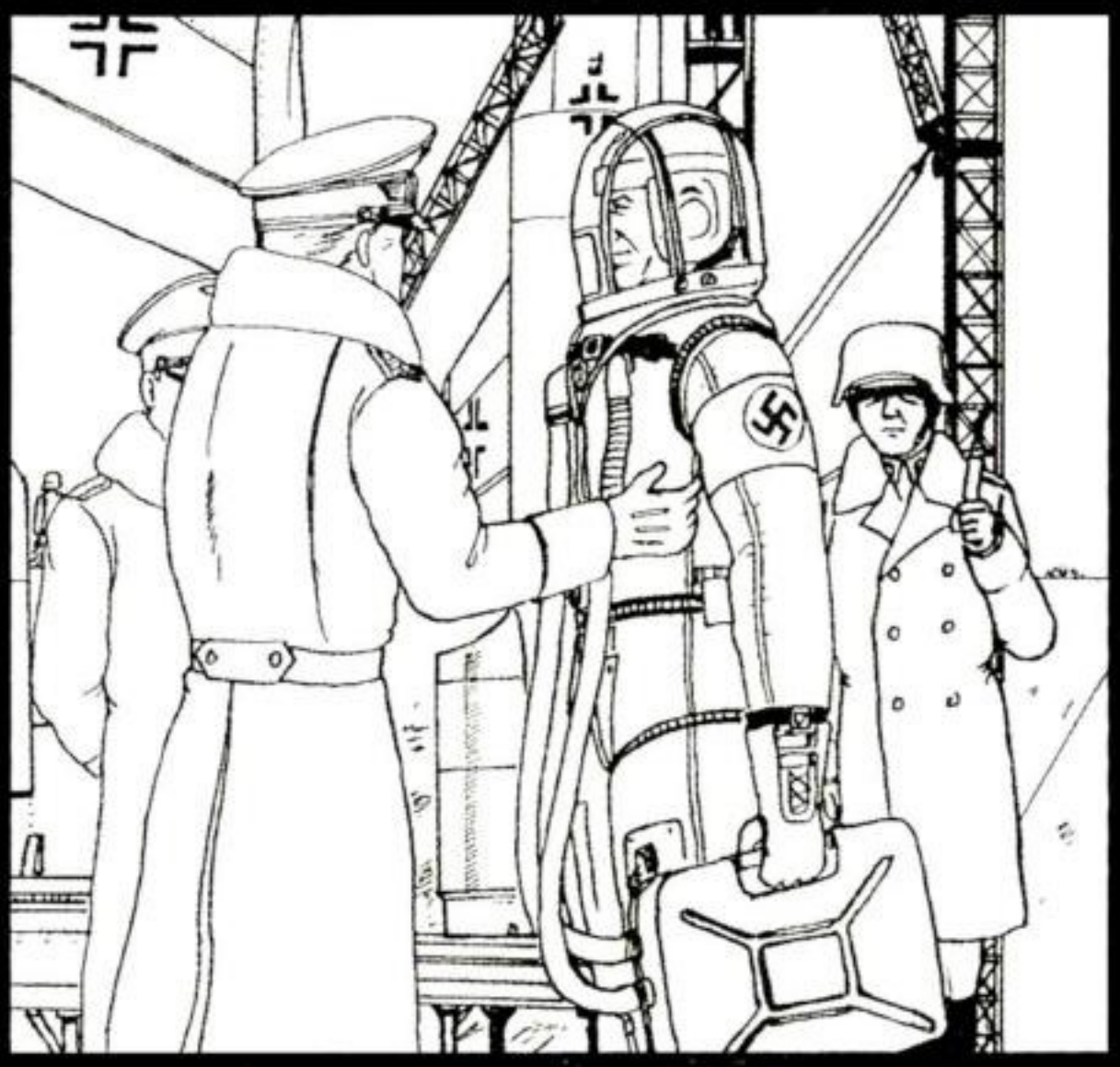


One thing to keep in mind if you're thinking about employing this style is that due to the intensive amount of selections, it can really slow you down. So it helps to have a fast hand and an even faster computer.

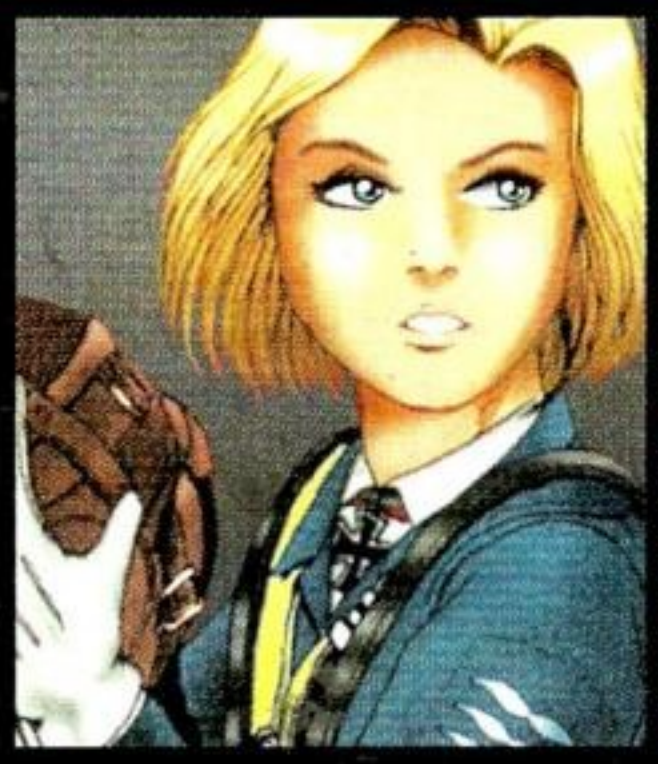
On the right is an example of the use of the combination of airbrush and selections to build the structure of a character's face. The use of selections allows for the precise control over how and where the shadows fall as well as the highlights.

RENDERING STYLES

SOFT AIRBRUSH

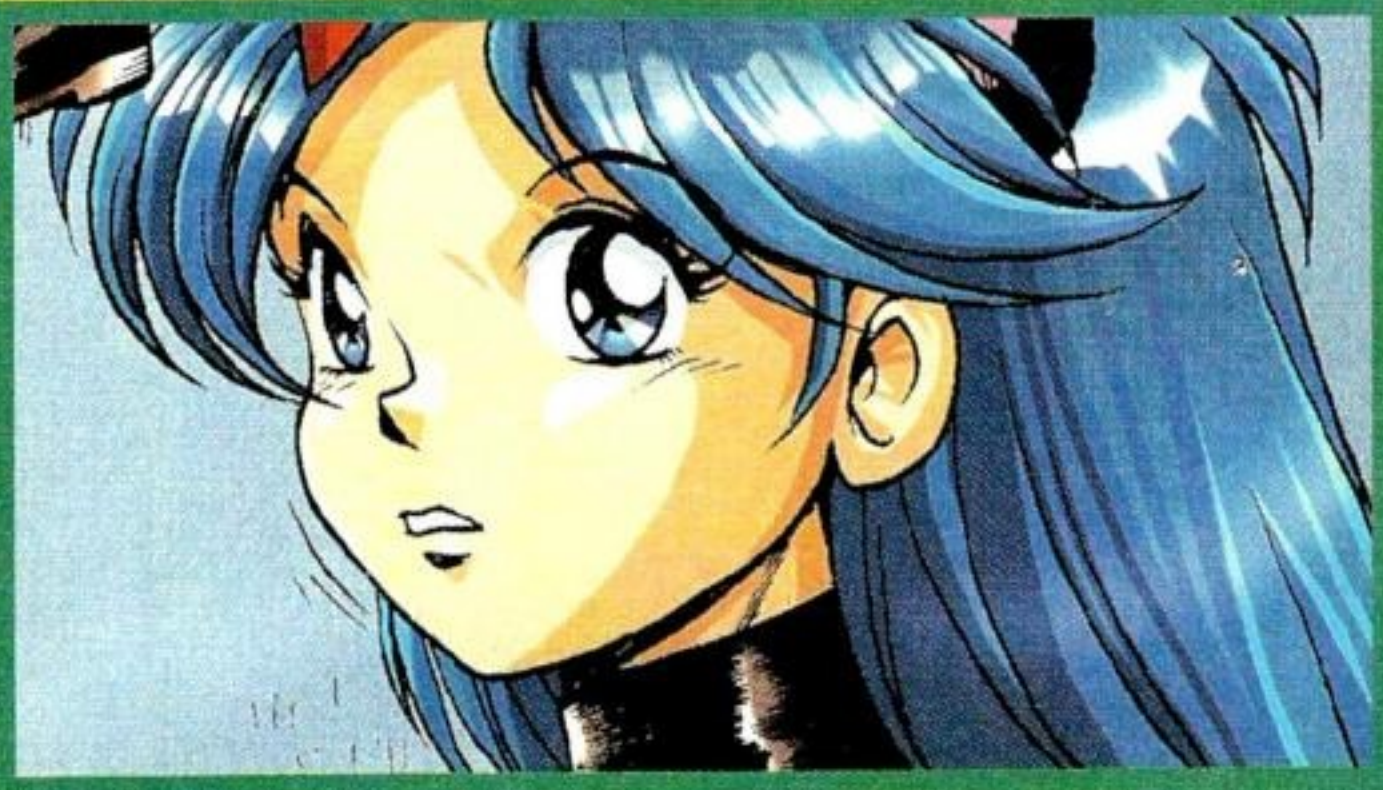


Soft airbrush is just that—rendering utilizing only the Airbrush and "working" the drawing until achieving the desired effect. It's a fairly simple and straightforward style, great for beginners. The only time selections come into play here would be to isolate the entire area you wish to render. For example, to render a face, simply select the flat color with your magic wand and proceed to render.

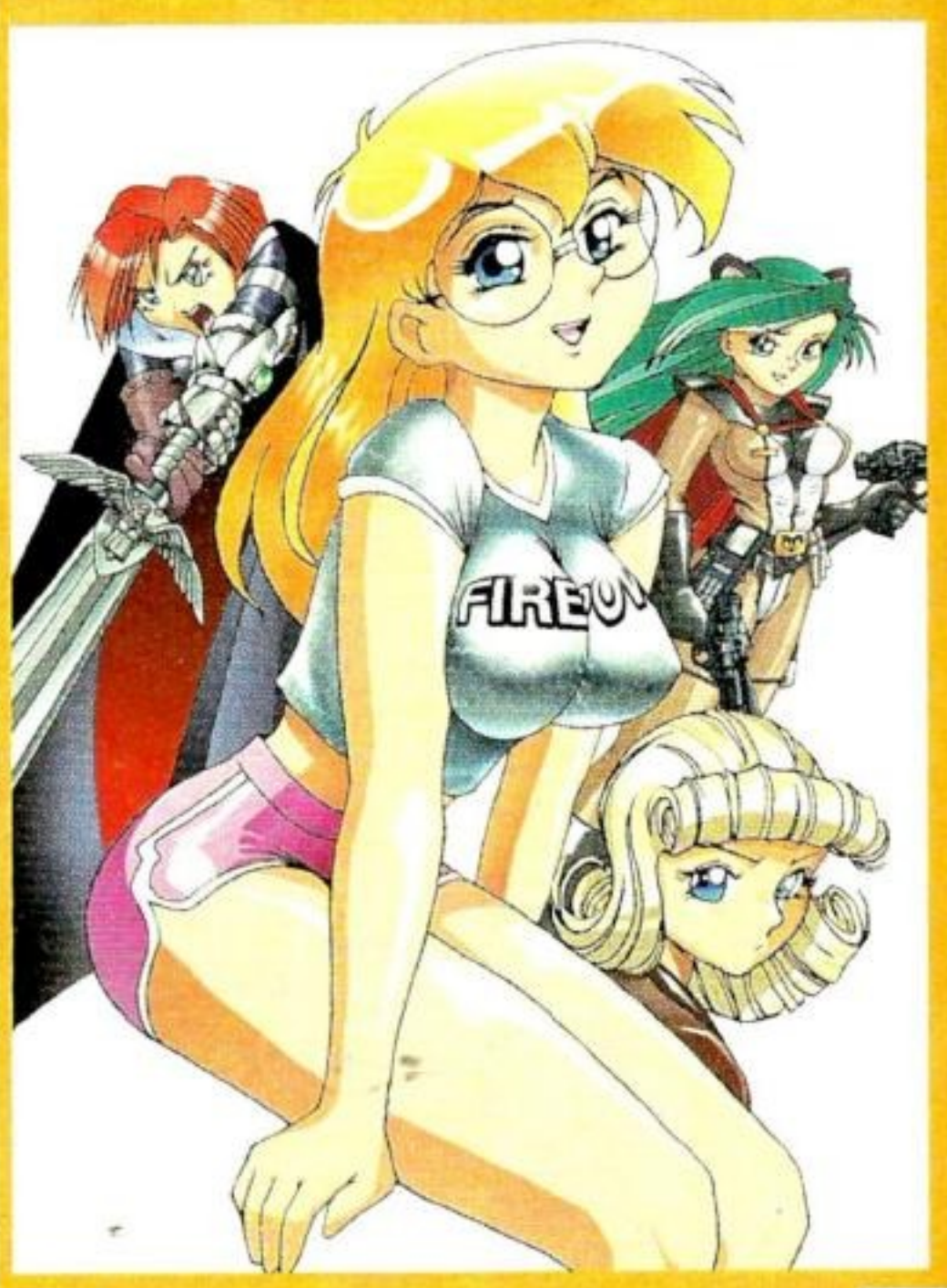


A side note: you may find it helpful to hide your selection while in the process of rendering. Resembling something like "marching ants," the selection itself can be somewhat distracting. Use the Hide Selection option.

Here's an example of the difference between hardedge and soft airbrush.



Anime-style coloring is not as simple as it may seem. In fact, it can be deceptively difficult. Color choice and the shape of the different values mean everything. There is also far more that one simple approach to it. A little research will make that evident. The most common amount of different values on a skintone will range from two to three, but can easily exceed that. The art will more than likely command the sort of coloring "style" you need to employ to best serve the structure and style of the characters. Again, we suggest you do some research to learn more about the wide range of approaches you can take to this fun and unique style of coloring.



RENDERING STYLES

ANIME

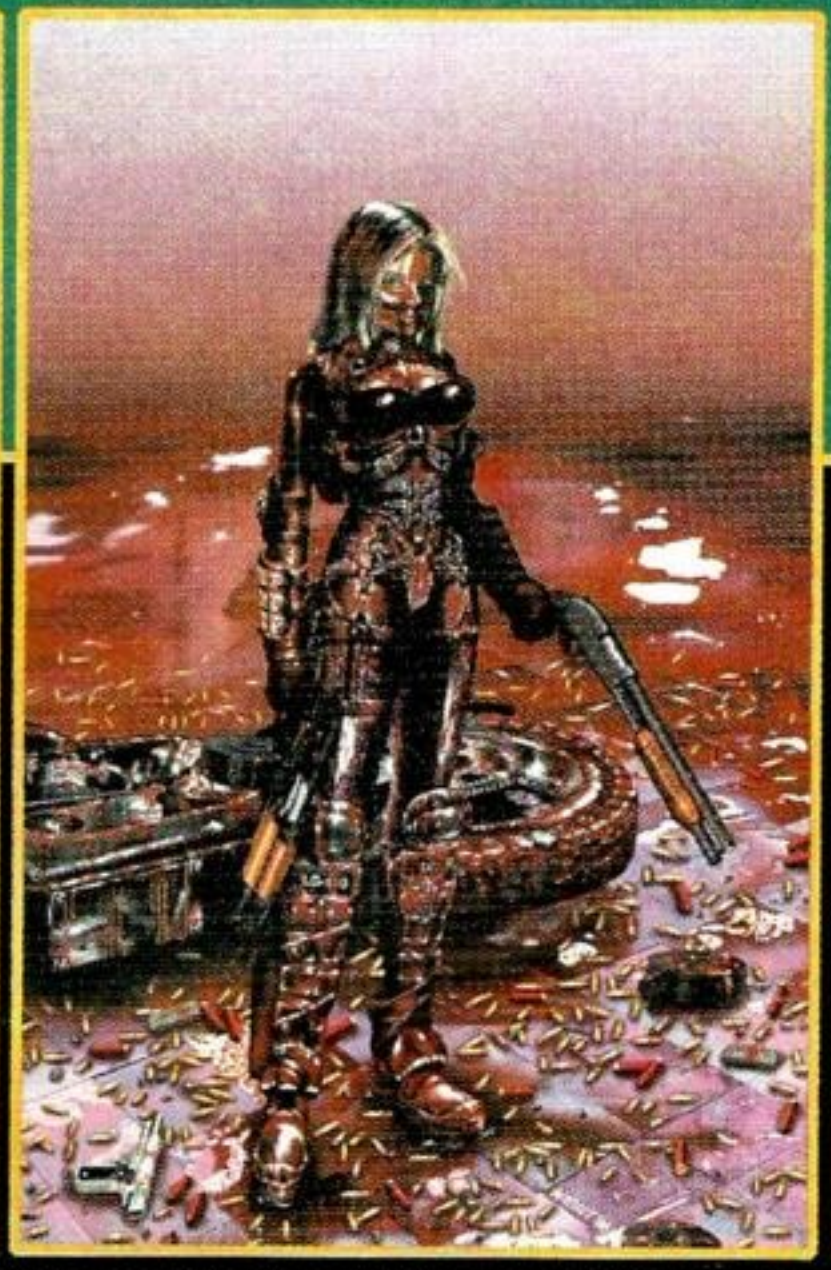
In most anime, the characters are colored in a simple, hard-edged style, but the backgrounds can be lavish and complex, rendered like a painting.

IT'S A QUIET DAY AT THE PEEPLE HOUSEHOLD...
...OR SO IT WOULD NORMALLY BE!
123
THIS IS THE PLACE!
BEAH! WHAT A DUMP!
OH WELL, LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!
C'MON! C'MON! I HAVEN'T ALL DAY!

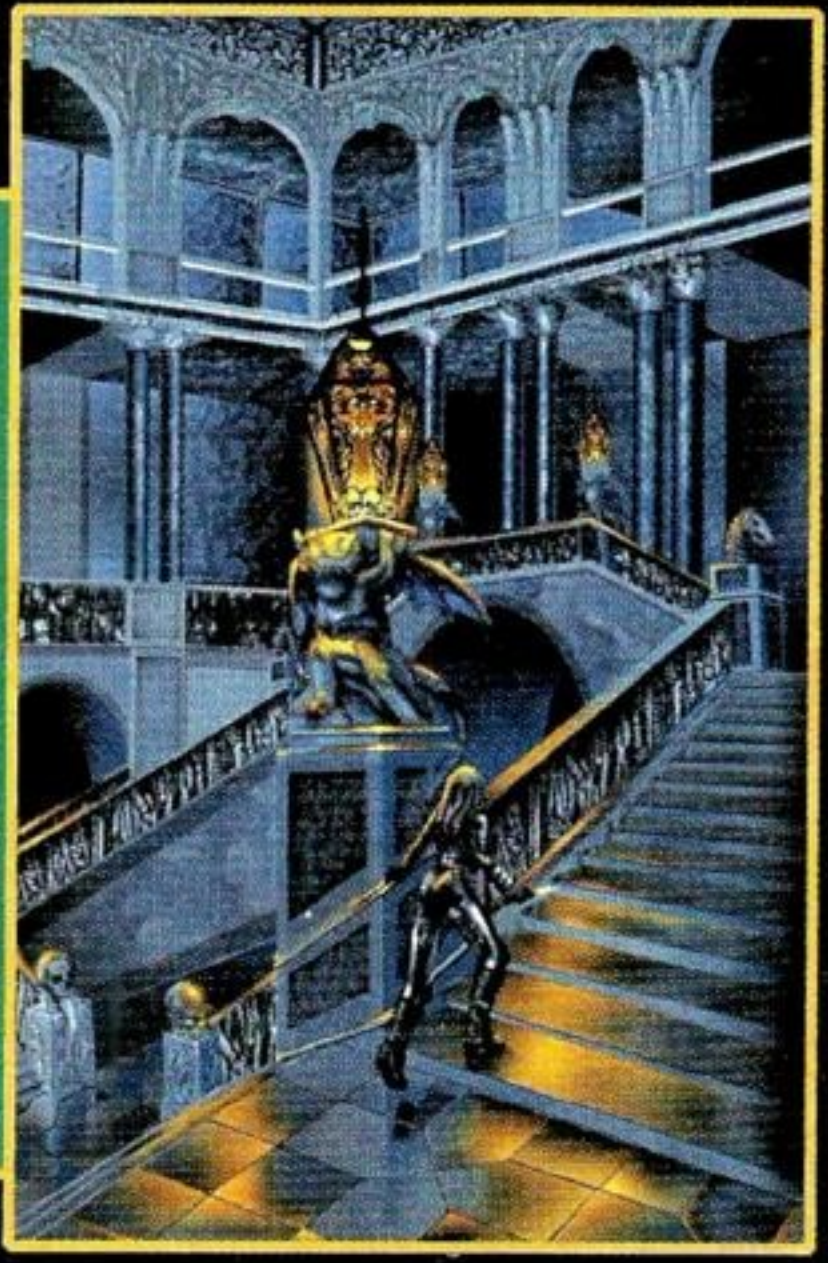
WELL, THIS IS WHERE YOU WILL BE STAYING, AOLORA! I'VE GOT TO SHOP FOR DINNER, SO PLEASE MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME!
WELL, IT AIN'T HOME, YOU OLD HAG! I MIGHT AS WELL BE LIVING IN SOME MUDHOLE IN THE OUTER RIM!
FINE! FINE! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!

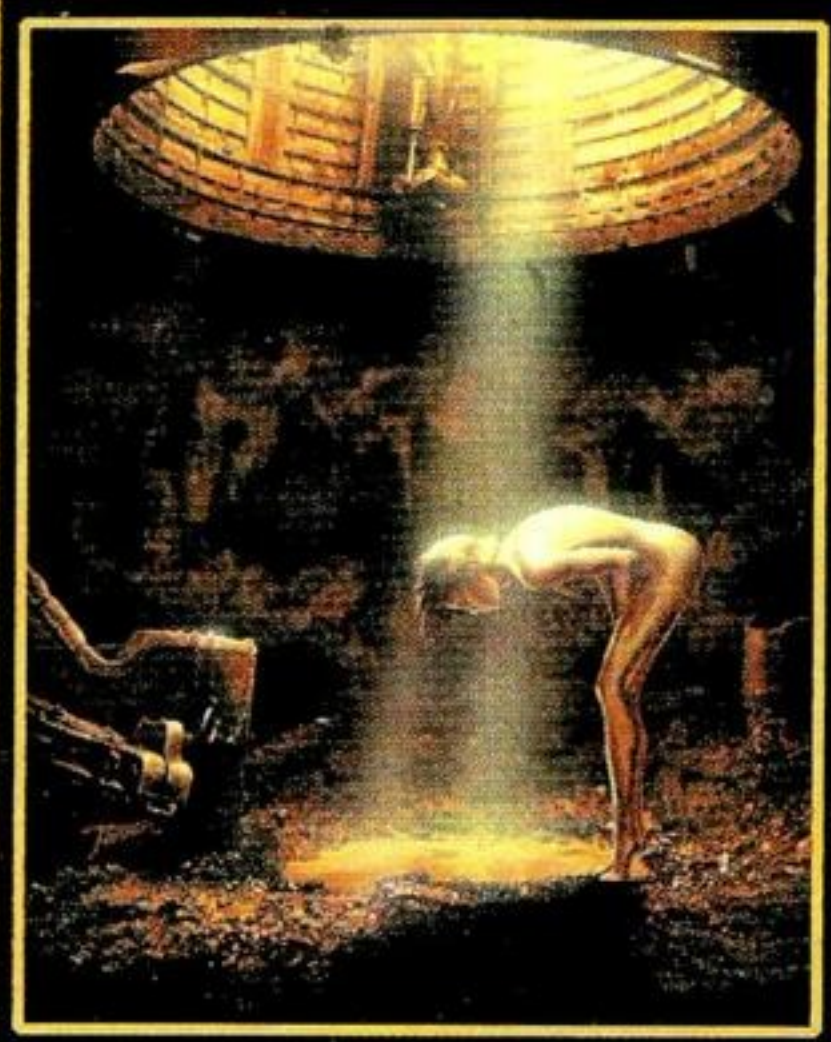
RENDERING STYLES

PAINTED



The painted style is also just that, a comic book that is painted. Except in this case, it is painted entirely digitally—no paint, no canvas. The artist may either draw the images, scan them in and paint over them, or completely render the image on the computer. This style is often done in a photo-realistic manner. Of course, you can be just as impressionistic or abstract as you like. It allows for complete control over the finished image. No need to worry about affecting the linework of a piece. A lot of painted comics basically mimic the techniques of actual paintings. This requires a lot of experimentation to achieve the desired effect. You may need to learn as many tools and filters as possible to capture the right look. It may also require a ton of reference material.



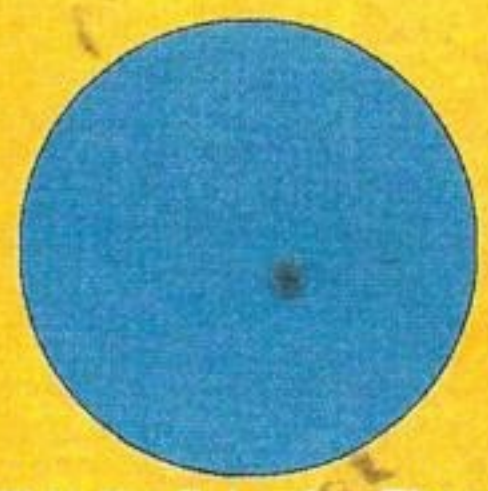


DEFINING THE STRUCTURE

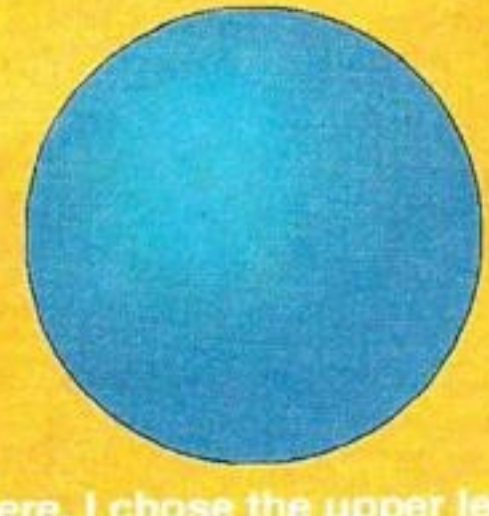
Above is the finished version of a fully rendered panel. What we're going to concentrate on here is the importance of giving volume and mass to objects through the use of lighting.

As you can see, when you take away the linework, you can still easily make out the structure.

The approach is simple. Break down the structure of something to its basic components.



Fill in the flat color. Then consider the light source. Most of the time, an artist will indicate the light source through the use of shadows on the figure.



Here, I chose the upper left-hand side. First, I lay down the initial airbrush stroke.

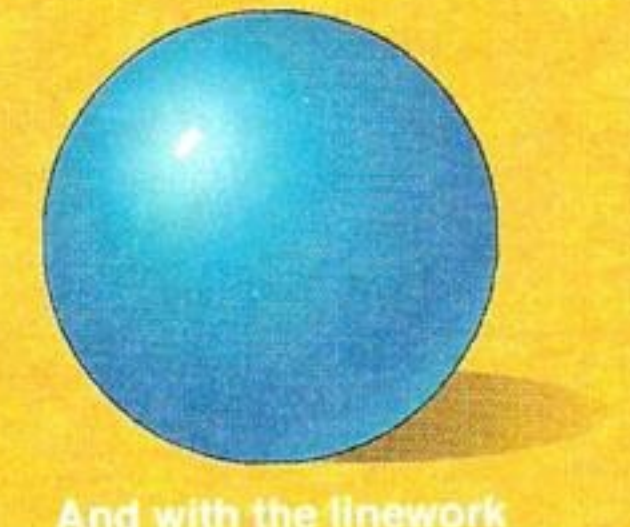
Then a second stroke with more intensity.

After that, I select a "hot spot" where the light hits the object at its most intense. Keep in mind that the closer something is to the light, the brighter it will be, and vice-versa.

Then I add the darker value where the light is not hitting the object.

Then you may want to add a secondary or reflective light source.

Keep in mind any shadows your object may be casting.



And with the linework visible, you see the finished product.

As you can see from the line art above...

...it can become even more defined through color.

The ribbed cuts are not even indicated on the linework.

It's the creativity of the colorist, starting with the flat color..

...selecting the area and laying down an initial tone, keeping in mind the shape of the object...

...making the first length of cuts...

(the selection masked)

...airbrushing the selection...

...adding additional cut selections for definition...

...airbrushing the new selection...

...and adding the cut "hot spot."

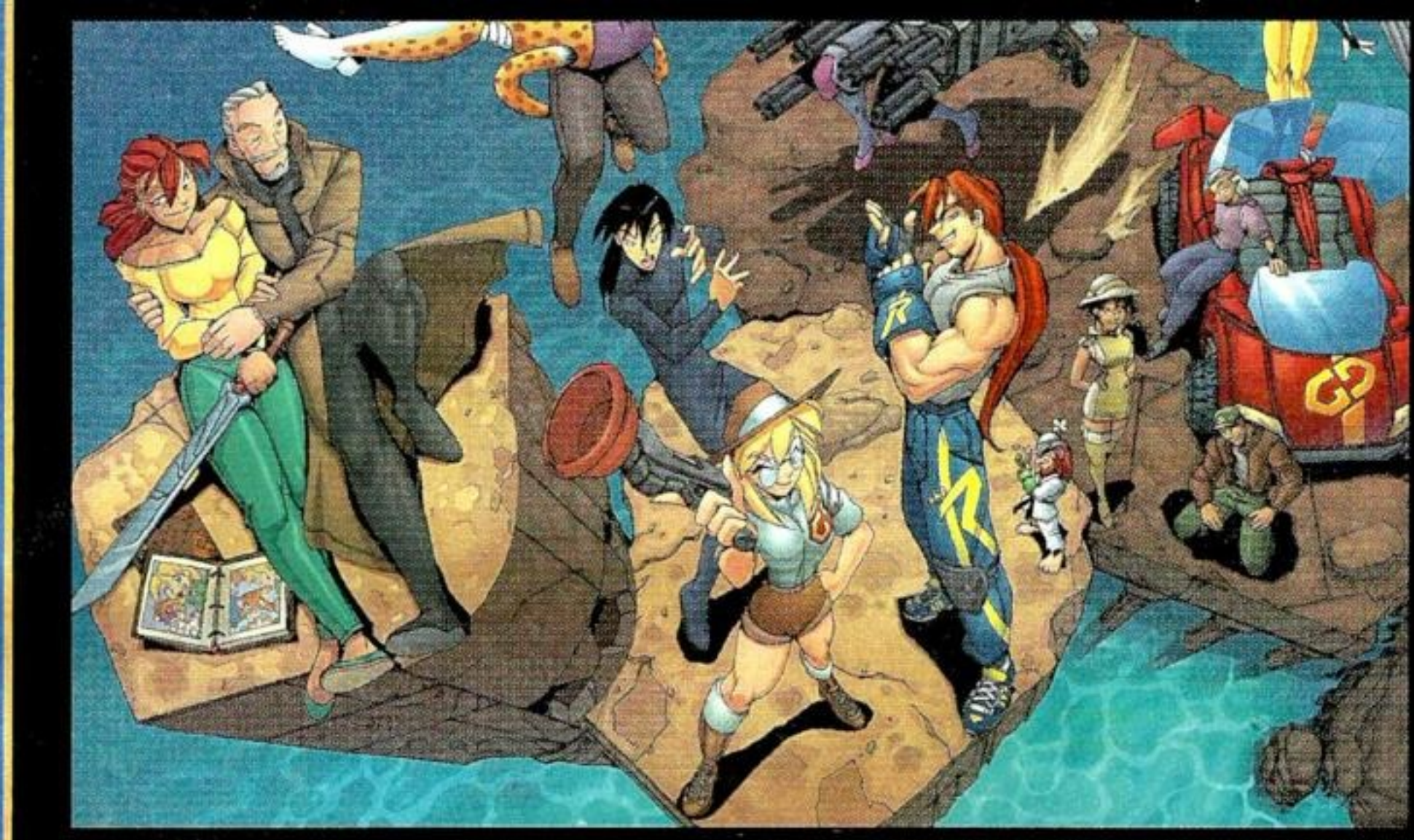
The finished ribbed cuts on one of the character's leg muscles.

For added definition, a shadow selection is made that...

...when airbrushed with a darker tone, gives the shape more volume.

Adding more cuts utilizing the same steps.

The completed piece.



Rendering background elements is just as important as rendering the figures. There are many ways to show texture in coloring: smooth and rough surfaces, water and rock, metal and glass, etc.
Here we'll look at the top surface of the rock pillars, which were given a "pitted" rock look.

Here's the finished rendering...

...the high spots...

...and the low spots of the surface texture.

It begins with...

...a light airbrush base tone...

...then an initial pattern selection...

...lightly airbrushed.

Smaller selections are made in the dark areas...

...and airbrushed with an even darker tone for added texture.

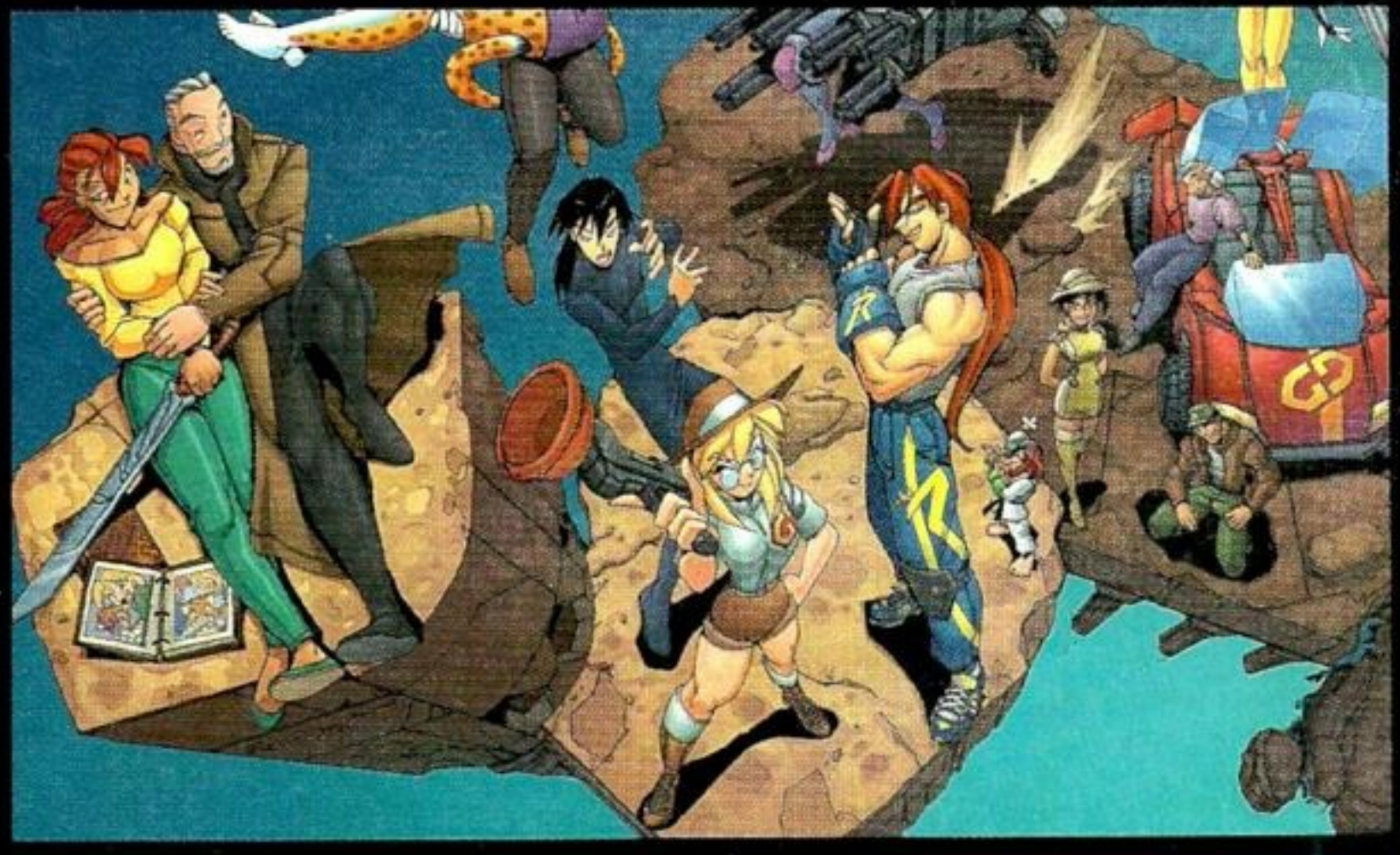
Finally, selections following the pattern edges...

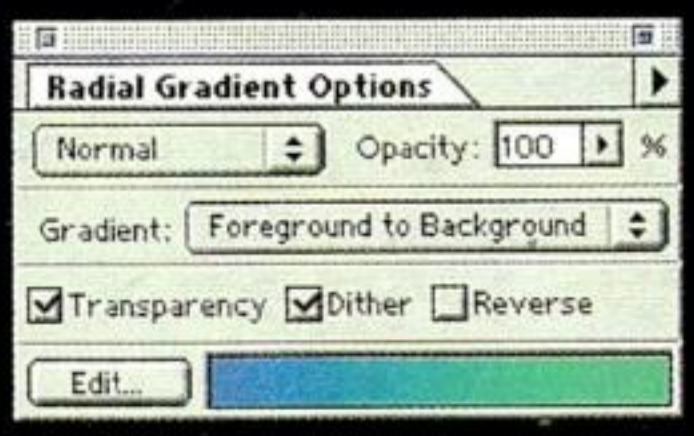
...are airbrushed with the same darker tone to give the rock depth.

Now, we'll focus on the water in this image. Water can take on many traits, from turbulent tides to a calming pool. It's best to decide ahead of time which approach you'll take in rendering water and how appropriate your choice is for a particular piece. In this case, a calming pool effect was rendered with ripple reflections and a turquoise tone was utilized for the color.

Start by selecting the desired area...

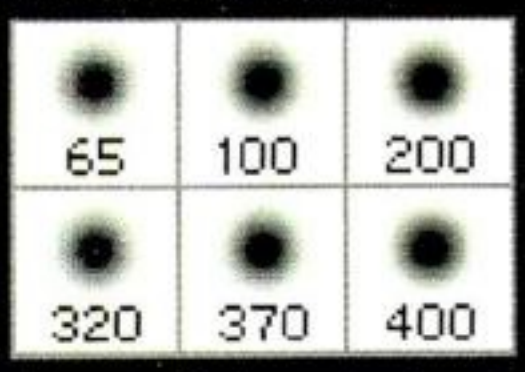
...then run a radial gradation, keeping in mind the overall lighting focus of the image.





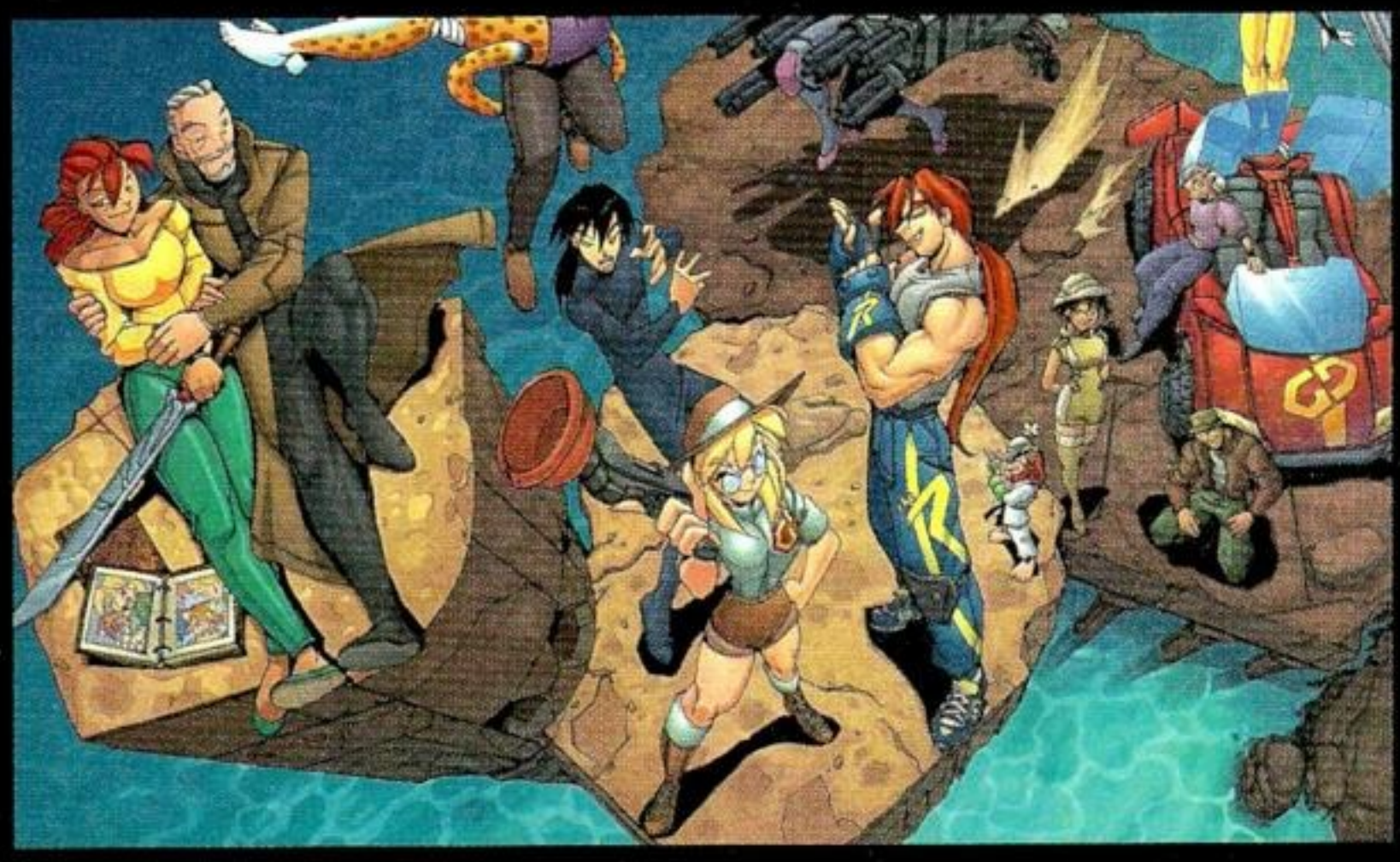
The Gradient Tool Options palette from Photoshop 3.0: Choose settings which give you the best results.

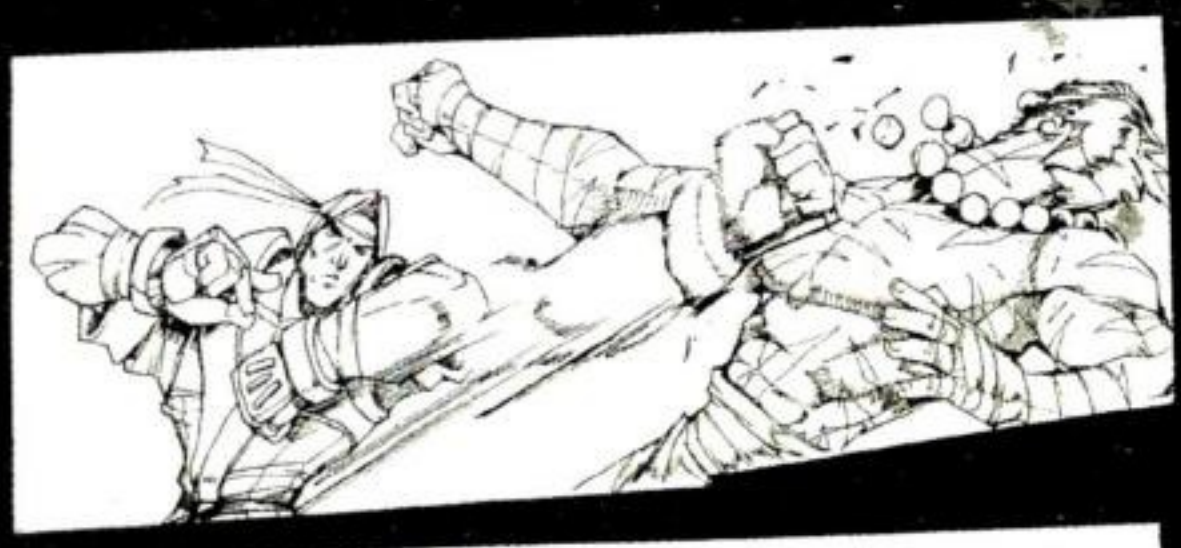
Next, the ripple selection is made and a radial gradation or a large airbrush stroke is made to highlight the water surface.



Large Airbrush sizes. The numbers indicate the brushes' pixel spread radius.

The finished piece!





PRESENTING...

遺 LEGACY 産

Coloring by Joe Weltjens

Here's an example of the potential of utilizing Photoshop to color line art. This page was taken from Legacy #1 by Fred Perry. As you can see, the transition from black and white line art to fully rendered image demonstrates some of the incredible versatility of the program. 2-D lineart takes on a 3-dimensional form. Adding depth helps create volumetric shape and mass. Special effects and dramatic lighting add to the initial artwork's visual punch. An energy blast strikes with even more power, videogame screens cast theatrical lighting, and a background created from scratch adds a sense of place.

To create a background image such as this, you can either select the space surrounding the characters and render it directly on the same file or create a separate file and create the image there in order to import it into the background space when you are finished. Keep in mind that if you start a new file, keep it proportionate to the panel into which you'll be importing it. For this particular page, the latter method was used. When you are finished with the separate image, you just select all (Command-A), copy (Command-C), and cut (Command-X). Then go to your original file, select the area into which you want to insert the image and Paste Into (under the Edit menu).

Note: The "Command" key is on Macs only. The non-Mac equivalent is the "Control" key.

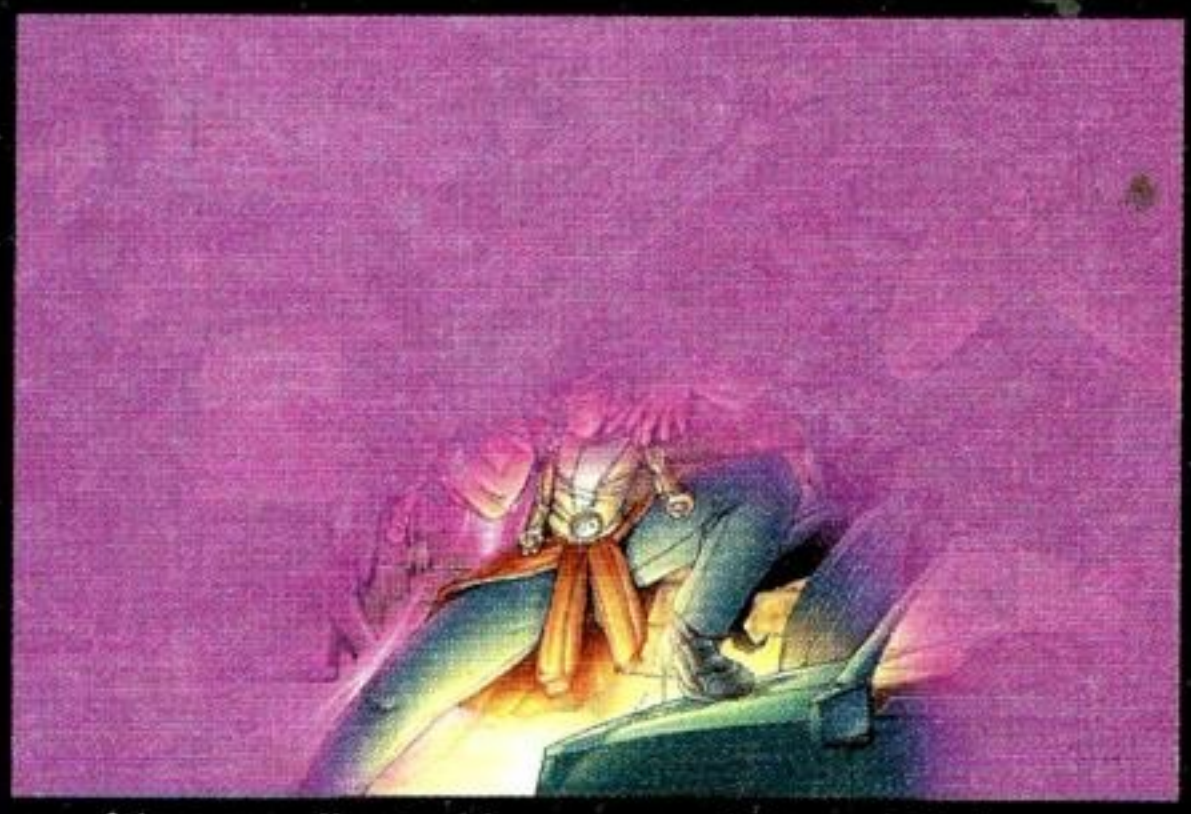
LIGHT SOURCE

When first starting a piece, considering the light source is one of the most important things. It will dictate the outcome of the overall finished product. It will plot the course of your rendering map.

Here the primary light source is the book in the center of the image. Take note of how it "hits" the figures' anatomy and clothing. Also note the shadows it casts on the ground as well as the light it produces on the ground.

MULTIPLE LIGHT SOURCES:

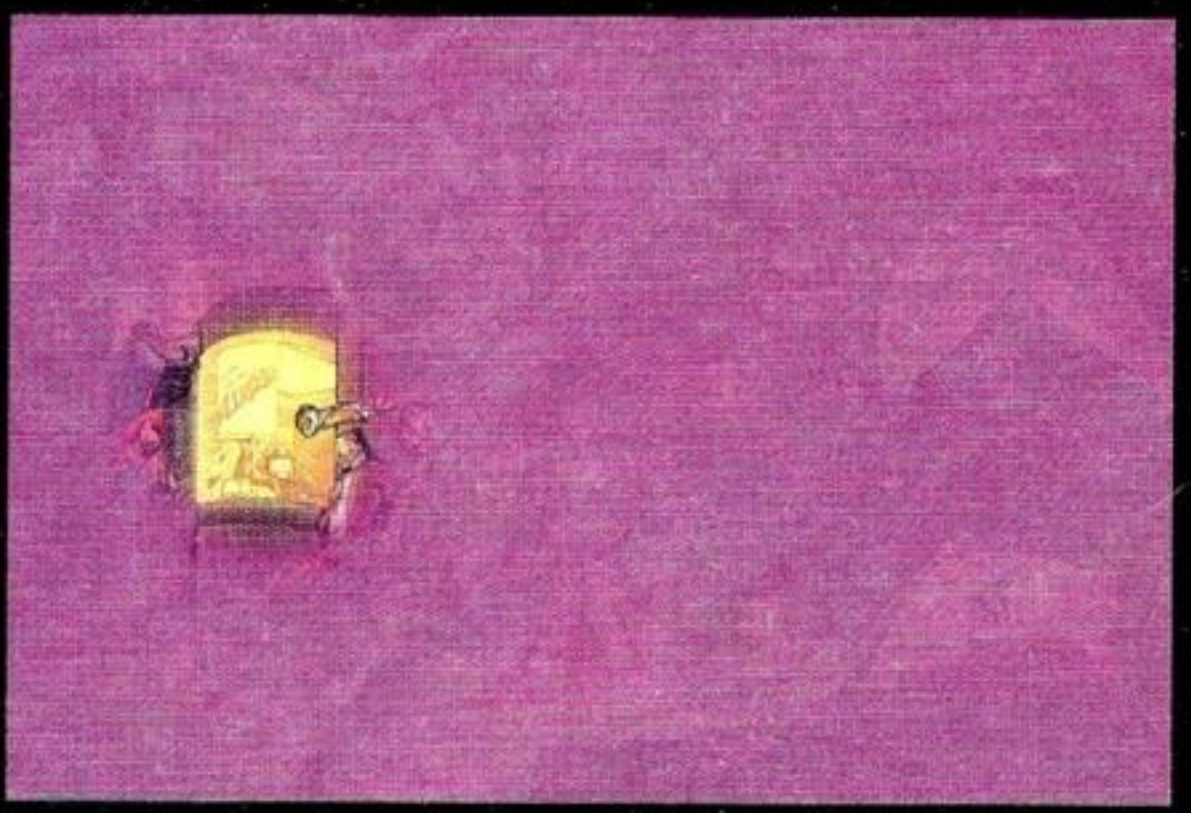
The piece above is a little more complicated, and not just because of all the elements it has.



It's complicated because of the multiple light sources.

Each light source directly affects the elements around it.

Each light source has its own importance. The properties of each vary from extremely harsh to acutely subtle.



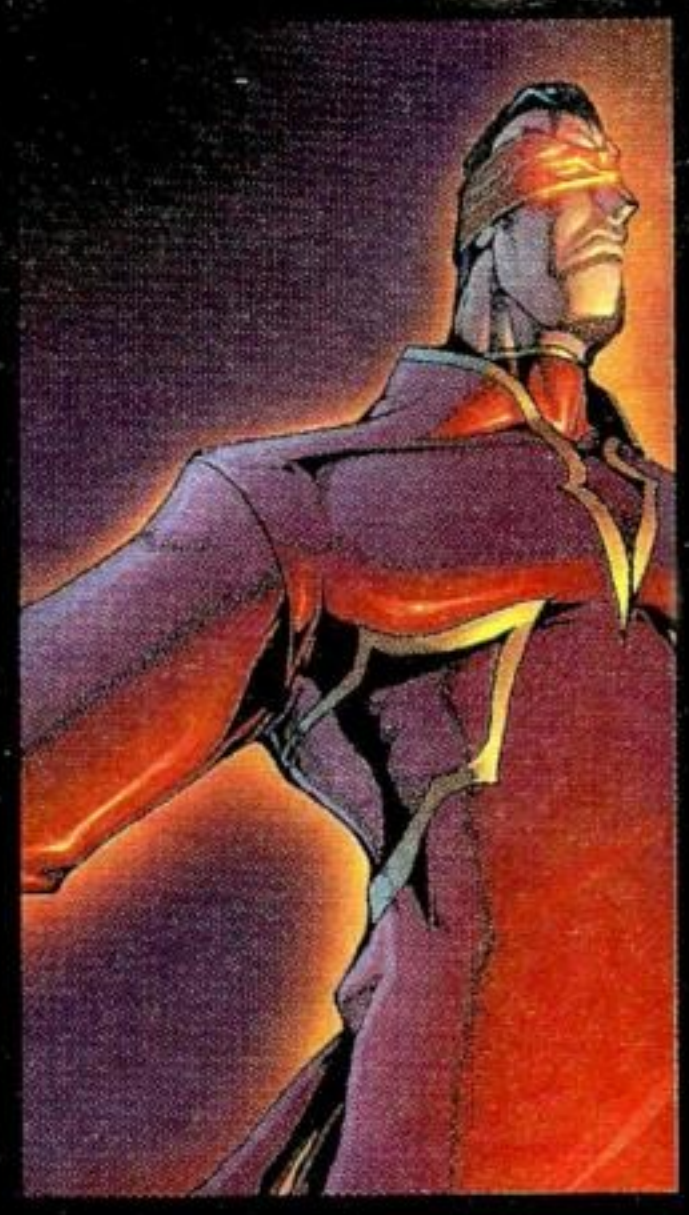
It's up to you to figure out which will be the more dominant and which will be the less dominant light source and render appropriately.

...
CAN YOU OVERCOME ME, JOSEPH? CAN YOU DO IT NOW? IT HAS TO BE NOW, BECAUSE YOU'LL NEVER DO IT LATER!
I'LL BE MUCH TOO STRONG FOR YOU LATER!
THAT'S IT, JOE! GET UP!!

DUAL-LIGHTING:

Subtle touches such as secondary lighting can give your color rendering a greater impact, not to mention they look really nice when done correctly. It should be noted, though, that it needs to be used appropriately. Overdoing makes a piece look way too over-rendered, and if you made every shape dual-lit, it'd take a very long time to render the overall piece. It works best when scenes take place in darkly lit places with a powerful primary light source.

There are many specific colors you can use to dual-light your subject. Each depends on the color you are going to use for secondary light. Also, if there is a specific secondary light present, you're more than likely going to use a hue of that particular light source to illuminate your subject.



DRAMATIC LIGHTING:

YOU ARE DANGEROUS, JOSEPH DUNAR.
YOU MAY NOT HAVE ALL OF TIMERON'S STRENGTH...
BUT YOU DO HAVE ALL OF HIS FIGHTING SPIRIT...
UGH!!
OKAY...
OKAY THEN!!
COME ON!

Dramatic lighting casts very distinct, and usually hard-edged highlights and shadows on objects. When used effectively it can provide a strong visual dynamic to a particular piece.

As presented here, light sources are crucial for giving forms dramatic depth and impact.

NEXT!

Jo? I--I DON'T THINK THESE GENTLEMEN A-APPRECIATE THE GOOD HUMOR OF YOUR "TRASH-TALK"...

HEH, TOO BAD...

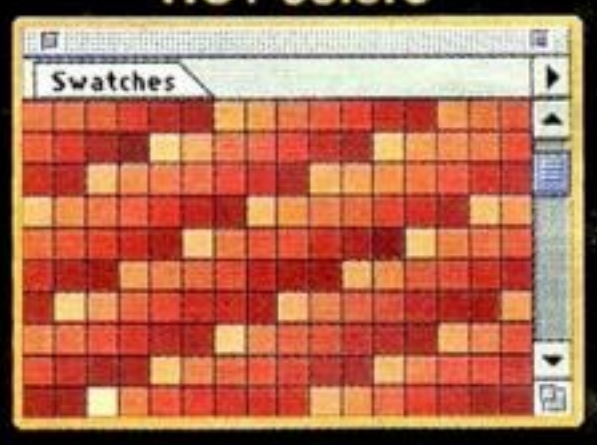
LET'EM TRY TO KICK ME OFF THE MACHINE, THEN...

BY THE WAY, TRACY... WHAT TIME DO YOU HAVE? SIX-O-CLOCK?

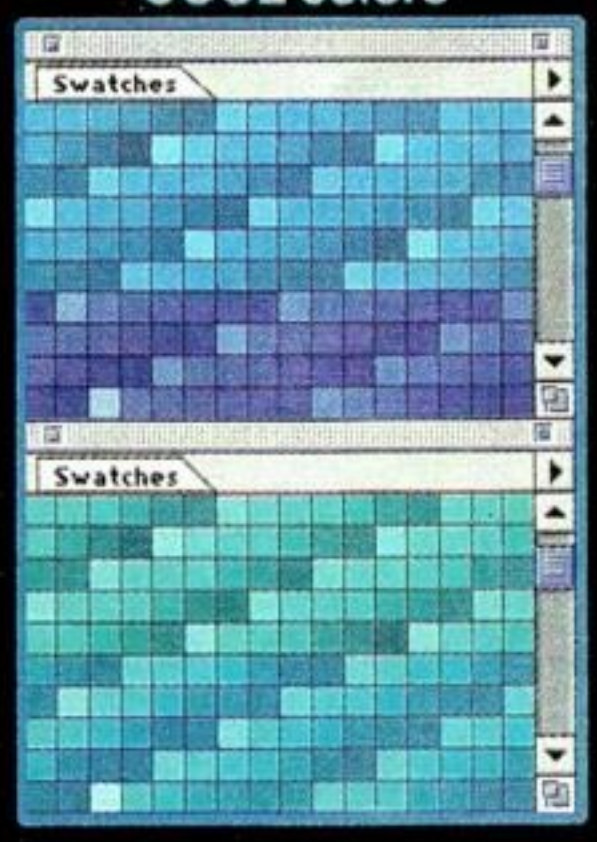
YOU WANT A PIECE A' ME TOO?

Using monochromatic coloring schemes allows you to express a variety of moods. Reds and "hot" tones give a feeling of excitement, tension, and immediacy, as opposed to blues and "cool" tones that express serenity, calm, and sorrow.

HOT colors



COOL colors



When two forms are close together or need to be visually separated, color can make all the difference in the world. Desaturating the colors on the foreground figure separates him from the background figure while still giving him a strong visual dynamic. The use of a strong edge lighting helps accomplish this further while still maintaining each figure's own sense of how it occupies the panel.

Pushing elements or characters forward or back is extremely important. It can make important elements stand out and give the viewer more visual information on a particular piece's main focus.

VISUAL PUSH:

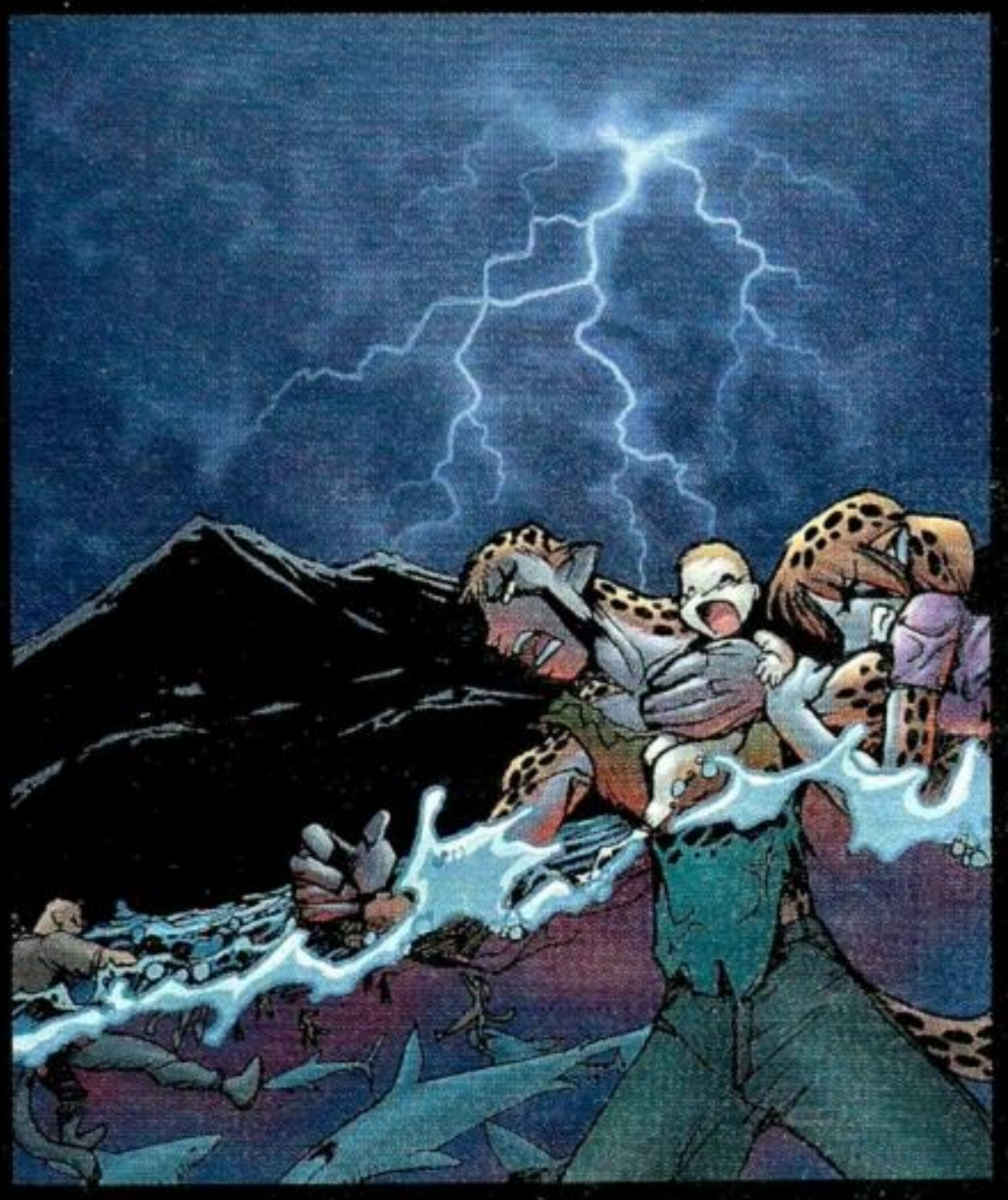
As you can see on the image to the direct left, The panel focus is pushed to the figures in the back, while the front most figure is colored monochromatic and desaturated.

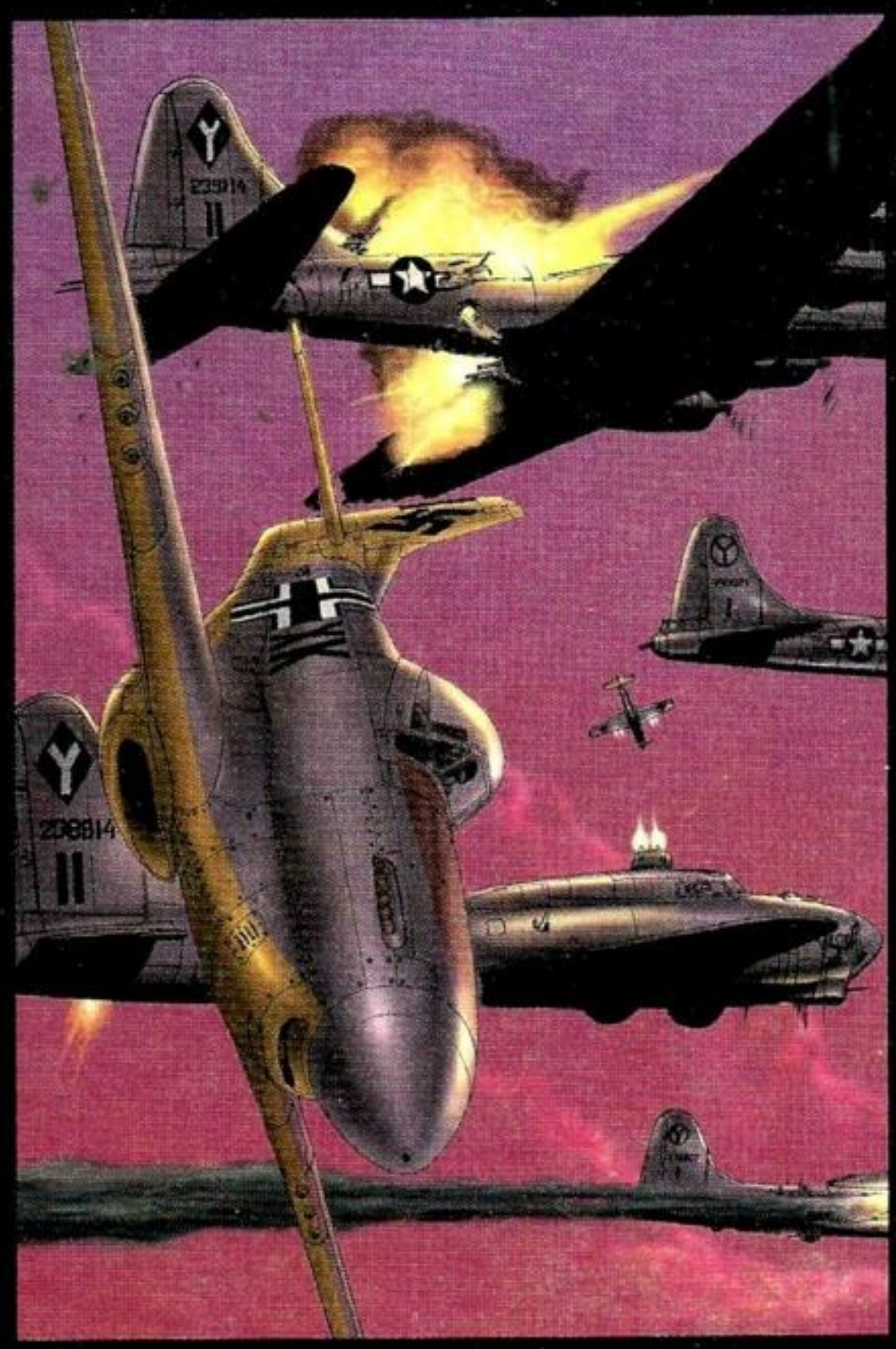
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, MY FRIENDS...
YOU WERE MANKIND'S LAST HOPE AND YOU DID NOT FAULTER!
THE POWER YOU BROUGHT US SHALL ENSURE OUR VICTORY OVER THE WRATH!!
YOUR TASK IS ACCOMPLISHED. RETURN TO YOUR HOMES AND LOVED ONES, BRAVE ARMY OF LIGHT.
LEAVE THE REST TO US.

IMPACT:

Certain images require a great deal of dramatic impact. You have to use judgment to determine when to really utilize this. If you use it too much, then the impact becomes lessened, but when you use it at the right time, the power of it proves evident.

Desaturated colors against a saturated background (or vice-versa) will create a strong, noticeable contrast. The key is to experiment and do so often. Only then will you know what works best and what works appropriately for a particular piece or panel. What is the overall theme of the piece? What elements or panels need to have the most visual emphasis? What type of mood is the artist trying to evoke? Before you begin any piece, it's always a good idea to have some type of idea on how you are going to approach the piece, even if you change your tactics halfway through a piece's completion.



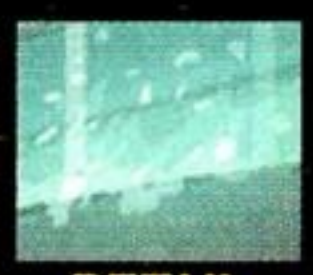


TIP! When coloring, it is always a good idea to study photos and paintings for particular color schemes and moods. Referencing is an integral part of learning how to color.

The approach you take to an image is extremely important. As you can see from the line art, you could give this particular piece a wide range of rendering, from calm afternoon sky to a dramatic sunset to a stormy night.

The background sky, when present, will intensely affect the overall mood of the piece. It defines the color scheme that you'll use to render just about every element in the piece, especially if your goal is to make your character feel like it is in the environment that the background presents.

On the finished piece above, the raindrops were rendered to enhance the the overall theme of a stormy night. What really brings the piece together is the added effect of the rain reacting to the surfaces that it is hitting. Attention to those types of details will make your pieces even more awe-inspiring to the viewer.



DETAIL

The ultimate key to coloring comics is to gain as much experience as possible. Only through trial and error can a person truly be as great as he/she can be. Learn the program as thoroughly as possible and experiment as often as you can. You'll discover methods, techniques, and combinations of tools, filters, etc. that will improve your skills even more. The more you do, the more you learn—it's as simple as that.

GOOD LUCK! *...your skill will take you the rest of the way.*

PRACTICE SCAN

CYBERTRONIAN

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